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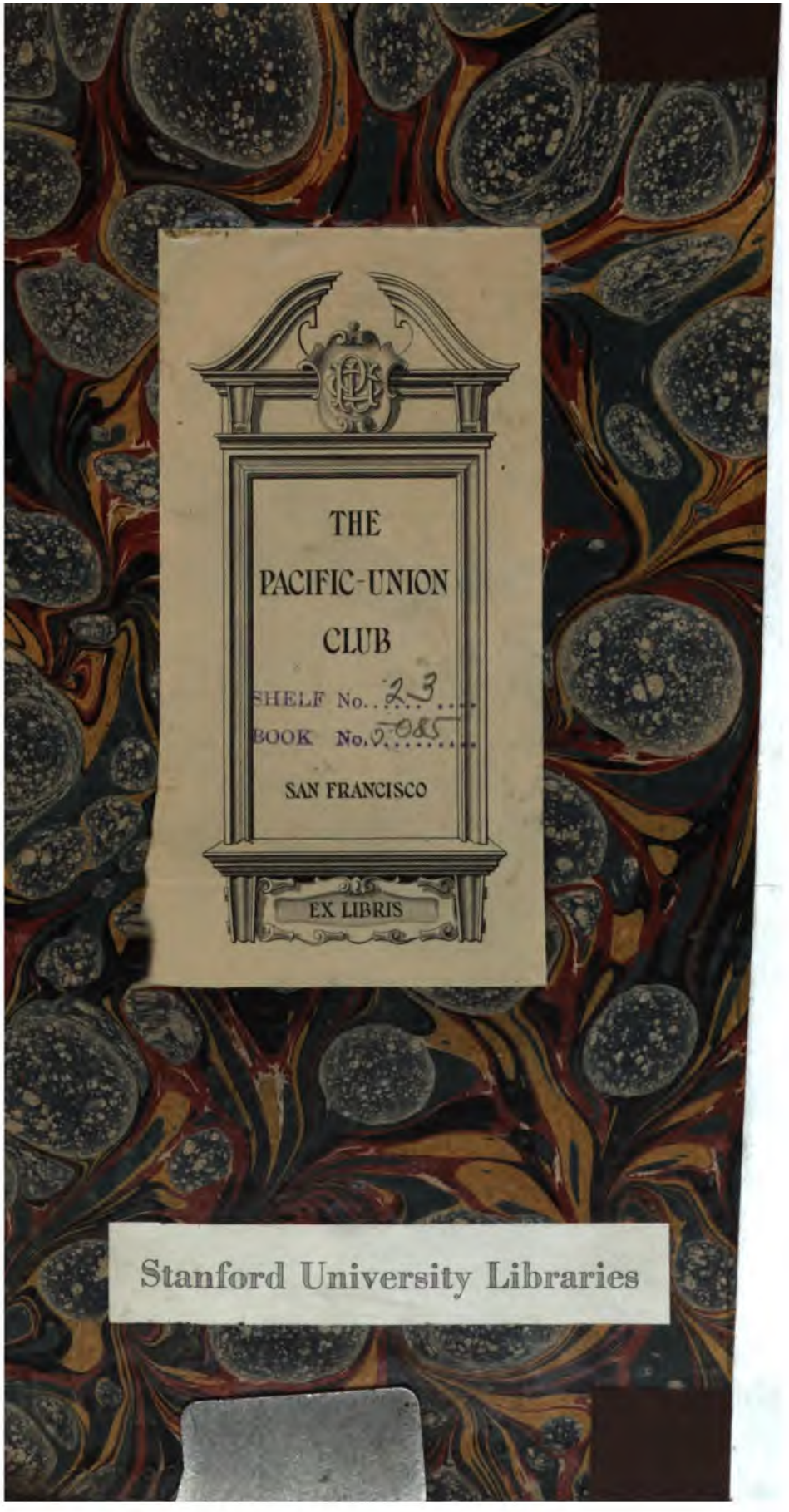
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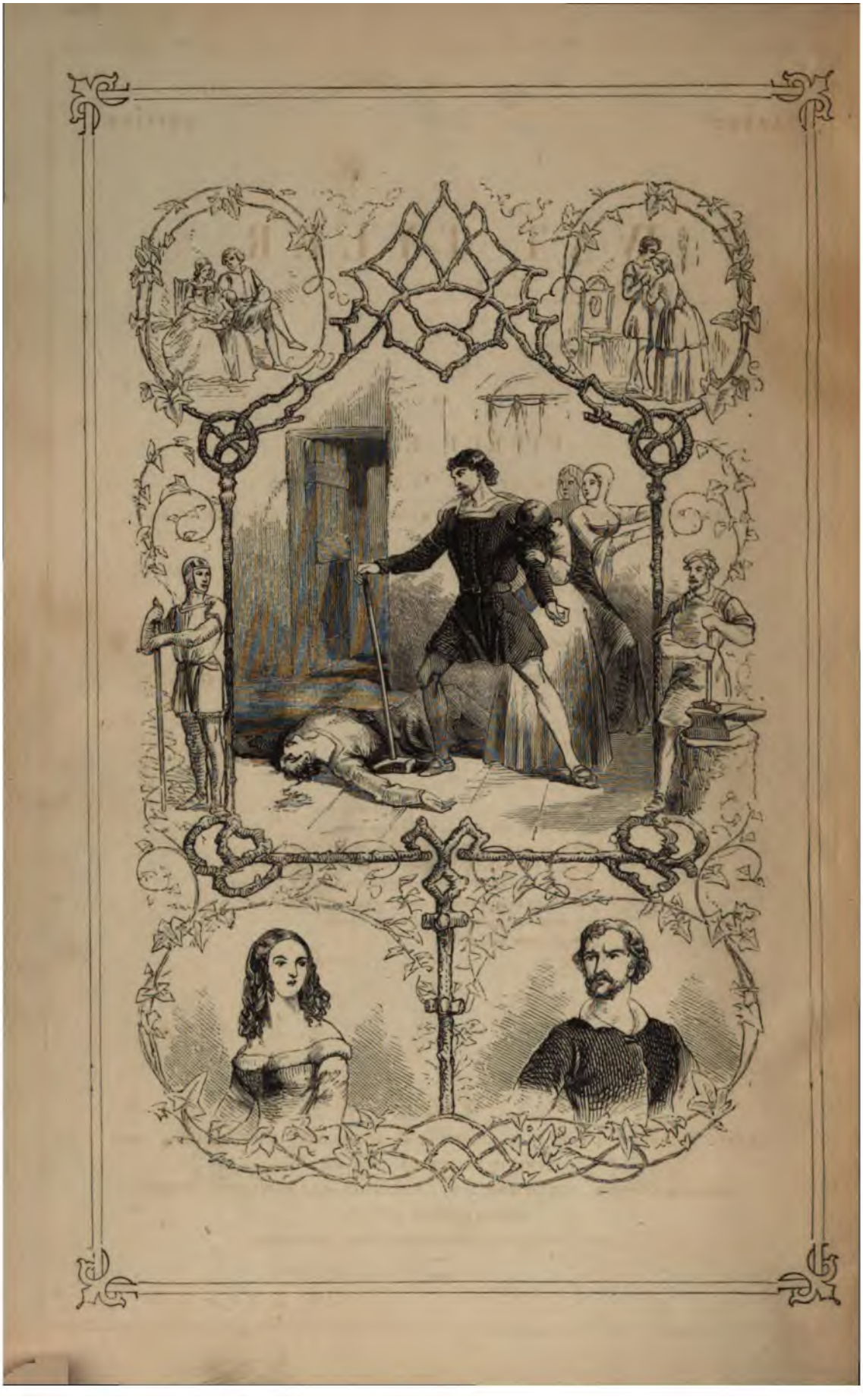

LARGE [EDITION.

WAT TYLER.

BY

PIERCE EGAN,

(EDITOR OF THE "HOME CIRCLE,")

AUTHOR OF "ROBIN HOOD," "QUINTIN MATSYS," "LONDON APPRENTICE," &c.

BEAUTIFULLY EMBELLISHED WITH

SIXTY-FIVE LARGE ENGRAVINGS.

"HE WAS ONE
GIFTED WITH THE STRONG ENERGY OF MIND,
QUICK TO PERCEIVE THE RIGHT, AND PROMPT TO ACT
WHEN JUSTICE NEEDED: HE WOULD LISTEN TO ME
WITH DUE ATTENTION, YET NOT YIELDING LIGHTLY
WHAT HAD TO HIM SEEMED GOOD; SEVERE IN VIRTUE
HE AWED THE RUDER PEOPLE, WHOM HE LED,
BY HIS STERN RECTITUDE."

SOUTHEY.

London:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. S. JOHNSON, 60, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, CHARING CROSS;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

EDINBURGH: MESSRS. OLIVER AND BOYD; J. MENZIES.—GLASGOW: LOVE; MURRAY.

DUBLIN: CURRY AND CO.

AND TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

1851.

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Dedication.

AS A

RECORDED TESTIMONY

OF A

FRIENDSHIP OF MANY YEARS' STANDING,

WITHOUT THE ALLOY OF ONE DISSENTIENT WORD,

This Edition of

WAT TYLER,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

IS INSCRIBED TO

WILLIAM SPENCER JOHNSON, ESQ.,

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

PIERCE EGAN.

London, June, 1831.

List of Illustrations

DRAWN EXPRESSLY FOR THIS WORK BY MR. W. H. THWAITES, AND ENGRAVED BY MR. JOHN WALL.

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[THE AUTHOR'S OWN EDITION.]

By PIERCE EGAN THE YOUNGER.

AUTHOR OF "ROBIN HOOD," ETC., ETC.

No. 1.

Wat Tyler.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROBIN HOOD."

Book 3.

"HE WAS ONE
GIFTED WITH THE STRONG ENERGY OF MIND,
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CHAPTER I.

"THERE is blood on that brow,
  There is blood on that hand,
There is blood on that haubark,
  And blood on that brand.

Oh! bloody all over
  Is his war cloak, I wot;
And he's wrapped in the cover
  Of murder's red sheet.

There is pity in many,
  Is there any in him?
No; ruth is a strange guest
  To ——"

HALBERT THE GRIM.

"FIVE hundred years ago" the south part of Kent, called the "Weald," was one immense wood. It was terribly infested with wild animals and men. It is, perhaps, a question which was the fiercer of the two—which the most merciless. The animals were chiefly wolves and wild cats; the men, serfs, who, having broken their vassalage, had fled to the fastnesses of the wood, and subsisted upon the fruits of their predatory acts. To such a height did they carry their malpractices, that it was a matter of considerable danger for single travellers, bearing property to any amount upon their persons, to pass through the wood; murder too frequently accompanied the act of robbery. Although the evil was felt equally by the inhabitants of Kent and Sussex, yet no means were exercised to remove it. Engaged in wars at home and abroad, the government did not trouble itself to legislate for individual safety; while the nobles around too frequently enlisted the villains in their service for the commission of dark deeds, to make any attempt to oust them from their abode: thus, unmolested, they carried on their depredations and villanies to a fearful extent. Originally the wood was infested by a few, but the impunity with which they were suffered to commit their crimes, induced many to join them; thus, from a small number, acting upon their own account, they became a powerful band, acting for mutual benefit, taking with equal facility and indifference a purse or a life—usually both.

They possessed a leader whose atrocities had gained him a terrible notoriety. He was known by the name of 'Grif of the Bloody Hand,' for he spared none who were so unfortunate as to fall in his power. He had been a soldier, familiarised to scenes of blood in the fierce wars between the English and Scots; but, finding the work harder than the pay remunerative, he deserted from his troop; and the life and emoluments of the denizens of the wood being more to his taste, he joined them. His daring bravery, his huge person, and his terrible dexterity with his weapons, soon obtained for him the leadership of the band.

No sooner had he succeeded to the post, than he proceeded to drill and organise his companions. He was well aware of the benefits arising from discipline, and failed not to make a thorough use of his knowledge. Such spirits as he governed, he knew must be ruled with a rod of iron, and the only mode of retaining his sway over them was by making them fear him. Any act of disobedience or insubordination was punished with instant death to the party originating it. The fatal blow he himself inflicted, being then assured that the punishment was duly administered, as well as that there was no grumbling on the part of

the administrator. An atrocity can scarcely be conceived which he had not perpetrated—a good imagined with which he could be charged. The attributes of his nature were of the worst character, and his person set his qualities off to advantage.

No one who looked upon him would give him credit for being, or ever having been, either amiable or virtuous, and, to do him justice, he never had. He was about six feet two inches in height, and his limbs were huge in proportion; his arms, hands, and legs were of extraordinary size, while his trunk, short in comparison to his limbs, made up for its want of length by its great breadth; his head was large, round, and set firmly upon a short thick neck; his eyes were black, bright, piercing, and restless, naturally large, but a perpetual frown from a pair of bushy eyebrows of villanous cut and dimensions, compressed them to a singularly small size; his nose was thick and long, spreading considerably at the tip, which was perforated with a pair of nostrils that might have been equally the property of a young bull; his thick lips were surmounted and surrounded by a ferocious-looking pair of mustachios, and a shaggy beard of deep black hair, of such length and character as to have done honour even to the renowned Blackbeard himself, had he rejoiced in their possession.

These features monopolised so much of his face that they left little room for his forehead, which, to use Shakspere's much hacknied expression, was indeed "villanous low;" in fact, the hair upon his head, of which he had a profusion straggling upon his neck and shoulders, seemed ashamed of it, and did its best to hide it, an act in which they were commonly successful; his voice was harsh, husky, and gruff, and his language exhibited no respect whatever for the saints. His dress was deep black; his men were habited in garments of the same colour, and he called them his "devils.' They did their utmost not to belie the name he had given them. "Grif of the Bloody Hand and his devils," were the terror of the county they inhabited and those approximating.

It was in the year 1336, during the stormy reign of Edward III., that this band was at the height of its infamous celebrity. Grif had not joined them more than two years, and three-fourths of that period he had been their leader. Since his elevation he had advanced the monstrous reputation of the band fearfully, and in wealth considerably. His aid was frequently solicited by a neighbouring knight or baron who might have some piece of deep villany on hand, and the remuneration was as handsome as the service was ugly; added to this, the plunder of travellers, sometimes of villages—a circumstance of unfrequent occurrence, as there was little or nothing to be gained by it—and occasionally the robbery of their employers, who were seldom in a condition to resent the outrage for fear of disagreeable disclosures, increased their store so considerably, that in their hearts they believed nothing could be so lucrative or so desirable as to be one of the devils in the band of Grif of the Bloody Hand.

Early in the spring of the above year, towards the close of a stormy day, a stranger, closely enveloped in a mantle, his broad slouched hat pulled over his brows as though to shun observation, walked at a quick pace through the wood. As he wound among the trees, apparently heedless of a small path slightly indicated in the deep grass with which the surface of a greater portion of the wood was covered, he glanced quickly from right to left, as though he expected to see some one start from each thicket, or the shade of every tree he passed. Whatever his expectations were, they were not realised; no one met his view; nothing living crossed his path; he hurried on, increasing his pace and his scrutiny of every place which could lend a shelter. The wind, which had been boisterous all day, was still rushing fiercely and noisily through the leaves and boughs, moaning and groaning as if they were mourning some misfortune which had happened to nature. Daylight was fast disappearing; the heavy masses of clouds, which were swiftly sailing over the forest, shortened the duration of the day, and the thickness of the trees anticipated night in the wood by half an hour. As the light diminished the stranger increased his speed, and penetrated deeper and deeper into the recesses of the forest; his bearing, save an occasional folding of his mantle closer around him, as the wind loosened its folds, was the same as hitherto; he still looked to the right and left, peering into each hollow and covert with intense eagerness; his penetration, however, was not rewarded by discovering aught, save the young-leaved shrubs dripping with moisture, and the tall gorse waving here and there in the wind. Had he been as active in casting his glances behind, as he was in directing them before and on each side, his endeavours would probably have met with greater success. At some small distance in his rear, a man followed his footsteps with the greatest perseverance; very shortly after he had entered the wood he had caught sight of him, and was now watching his every motion. The man was habited in the dress of a soldier, but the whole of his garments were black; upon his head he wore a steel helmet, in his hand he bore a spear, and by his side hung a large sword. He followed the stranger in the cloak with the greatest caution, treading as noiselessly as he could, and occasionally darting behind the massive trunk of a tree when he fancied he saw any indication on the part of the stranger of an intention to look back. Suddenly the watched stopped; the watcher doing the same, screening himself from observation by getting behind a tree; from which position he commanded a view of the stranger's motions without being observed by him. The stranger seemed perplexed, not as if he had mistaken his path, but as though he was disappointed in meeting with some expected party; after standing still for a short time, seemingly puzzled how to act, he raised his hands to his mouth and uttered a loud halloo, very much to the surprise of the spy in the sombre attire, who started on hearing it, but instantly quitted his place of concealment, and stealing stealthily up to the stranger, managed to reach him unseen and unheard; the wind being still as boisterous as it had been, and tearing through the wood with such violence that his footsteps were drowned in the noise it made. He struck the stranger smartly on the shoulder, and in a gruff voice demanded—

"What seek you?"

If a spectre had risen from the earth most unexpectedly upon a timorous hind, he could not have given a more violent start than did the stranger.

"What seek you?" repeated the dark habited man, smiling grimly at the effect his sudden appearance had created.

"Are you one of the 'devils?'" demanded the stranger, somewhat faintly, not quite recovered from his shock.

"And if I am, what then?" inquired he.

"I would be sure of that ere I answered your question," replied the stranger.

"Do I look like a priest, a girl, the Pope, or a saint?" scornfully demanded the swarthy and sable hero.

"Neither," replied the stranger, emphatically.

"Look I like a soldier in the king's pay, or knight,

or baron's vassal, a peasant serf, or a miserly townsman?"

"No!" was the reply.

"Have I a bishop's vestments upon me, a knight's frock, a king's raiment, a slave's skins, or a townsman's jerkin?"

"No!" again responded the stranger.

"Well! Whose colours wear I?" sneeringly questioned the sable hero.

"Satan's! if it be true that black is his distinguishing colour," replied the stranger, smiling.

"An' if it be, I am one of his crew," argued the fellow.

"So I should infer; but are you one of Grif's band?" asked the stranger.

"Thou'rt a fool, man—a dull, brainless ass; I have been expending my breath to tell thee as much, and now thou askest me if I am," returned the 'devil.'

"I conclude thou art, fellow," haughtily replied his interrogator; "and being satisfied on that point, I would have thee lead me to the presence of thy chief."

"To Grif of the Bloody Hand?" asked the 'devil.'

"Even him," coldly exclaimed the stranger.

The outlaw looked at him for an instant, and then said—

"Thou shalt have thy wish; follow me."

"Is he far from hence?" interrogated the stranger.

"Thou shalt see," was the reply.

"Does he dwell always in this wood?"

"Thou shalt know anon, if thou thyself wilt ask Grif the question."

"Is he easy of access?"

"Very; but it is rather difficult to quit him!"

"Um! he will do a service for a good consideration?"

"Undoubtedly. Have you a service to ask of him?"

"I have; and one, if he performs it well, for which he shall be well paid."

"He'll take care of that," muttered the 'devil,' with a laugh; and turning from the stranger, waved his hand as a token to follow him.

He led the way, and for some time they journeyed on in silence, save the noise created by the fierce blasts of wind, as they in succession howled and whistled among the trees. Once or twice, in the fast-increasing gloom, the stranger fancied he saw dark forms gliding from stem to stem, but they were gone as soon as seen, and he was left to speculate whether they were a portion of the band, or the falling shadows of trees, as he and his conductor swiftly passed them. While imagination was busy, reality soon decided the question. Three or four men started up in their path, all habited in a similar fashion to his conductor, who muttered a few words to them, and then they disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. This occurred several times during their progress. At length, on reaching a certain spot, his conductor paused, and drawing from his girdle a small horn, blew three mournful notes upon it. He waited a short time, and then heard three similar notes rise on the air in reply. Motioning to his companion to follow him, he struck into a new path, and a few minutes placed them in the presence of the dreaded chief.

He stood at the foot of an oak which had been blasted by lightning. A portion of his band were near him, and so far as the stranger could judge in the semi-darkness, he appeared to be passing judgment upon one of his men who had been discovered in an attempt to quit the band.

"I care not for your purpose in doing so," he heard Grif exclaim, in reply to the man having urged in extenuation that he was going to retire to the heart of England, his birth-place, and live a steady life. "It is enough for me to know that you have attempted to quit us with the secret of our haunt in your possession, and that such a crime is worthy of death."

"I would not have betrayed you to save my life," returned the delinquent, warmly.

"That's uncertain. I shall treat you as if you had, and therefore doom you to death," exclaimed Grif sternly. "Is there any one here assembled," he added, addressing the band, "who thinks the crime deserves not death? No answer. Stand forth, Mat Snake, thy fate is sealed."

"Pardon me," murmured Snake, "and you shall not see me as an offender again before you."

"Doubtless," sneered Grif; "nor in any other shape. If I were to pardon you now, the first opportunity you would show me a clean pair of heels. No! say your prayers, if you know any," he continued, with a brutal laugh, "and stand by this tree while I put into execution the sentence upon you. Dost hear me, dog? Why, thou cowardly knave, thou standest as though thou wert mumbling thy prayers in earnest! Hither, rascal, quickly, or I shall not be able to see to shoot thee!"

"I am no cowardly knave," exclaimed Snake; "I am not afraid to look death in the face now, or at any time. I am no boaster; but I have been too often in his company to fear to gaze upon him. I did not look for such a dog's death as to be shot in cold blood by you, Grif of the Bloody Hand; but, since it must be so, why I'll e'en bear it as becomes—"

"A devil!" interrupted Grif, with a taunting laugh.

"No, as a man," returned Snake, coolly; "for your devils are not men, and worse than brutes. I am ready, and God have mercy on my sinful soul!"

"Amen!" cried Grif. "And now, after that entertaining piece of morality, I will try if there is any truth in my aim in such a gloom as this. Stand nearer the tree, man!" exclaimed he, as he took up his position about twenty yards from the spot on which he had been standing. "I can scarce see thy face. That will do—steady."

Twang went the string of the cross-bow, the bolt flew, and the man fell without a groan.

"That's not a bad shot, Grif," he muttered to himself, as he proceeded to string his bow; "and now, Nick Grim, whom hast thou with thee?"

"A stranger, who seeks thee to ask service of thee," replied Nick, that being the appellative of the outlaw to whom we have already introduced our reader.

"Ha! is it so?" he rejoined; and turning to the stranger said, "What is thy name—who and what art thou?"

"There is no need that thou shouldst know my name or position—it can interest or avail thee nothing; all you require is to know my purpose, and have the satisfaction of receiving a handsome sum for the service you may render me in completing it," uttered the stranger.

"Possibly: but I have a knack of liking to know whom I serve, because it may happen that I might have to refresh their memories at some future period," returned Grif.

"If any such feeling actuates you in demanding my name and station," said the stranger, "dismiss it at once. I require a simple service of you, one which it will be easy for you to perform; you shall be rewarded handsomely for it when done, and that nullifies all obligation. I purchase your aid as I would any purchaseable commodity."

"But I sell my service unlike any other purchaseable commodity, sir stranger," observed Grif; "therefore your argument does not apply. Your name?"

"I decline to give it," said the stranger, firmly.

"Fool!" roared Grif, "you ask of me a service—is thwarting me the way to gain it? I will know who and what you are ere I move a step in the affair, whate'er it may be; and if thou'rt still stubborn enough to refuse to answer freely, yon dog's fate," he cried, pointing to the spot where Mat Snake fell, "shall be delight compared to thine."

"Were you to put your threat into execution in case of my defying you," said the stranger, with a slight nervous tremor in his voice, "you would lose a large sum of gold."

"I might for once forego the pleasure of receiving it, to witness thy agonies," exclaimed Grif, with a grim smile.

"But your band might not like to lose it," urged the stranger.

"My band obey my will, being satisfied that I know best what is needful to be done," sneeringly returned Grif; and, raising his voice, cried, "Ho, there!—a torch!"

In less than a minute, a large torch of pinewood threw a broad red glare over them.

"Tear his cloak and hat from him," growled Grif to two of his band, and the stranger was instantly dispossessed of them. Grif took the torch from the man who held it, and advanced to the stranger. He scanned him from head to foot, and saw that he was a young man, about eighteen or twenty years of age, rather above the middle height, well formed, possessing good features, dark hair, and black eyes of a wild, unsettled expression. His complexion was sallow; a scowl sat on his features; and there was an uneasy movement about the mouth, betraying him to be the slave of his passions. When Grif had satisfied himself with his scrutiny, he exclaimed—

"Further disguise is useless—I know you. It is true some years have passed since I saw you. You were then a boy—an ungovernable spoiled boy. Your features, however, have changed in the time but slightly, and in them I can easily recognise their master to be—"

"Hold!" interrupted the stranger, "you know me. Without mentioning my name, I believe you to be correct in your surmise. Keep that name locked in your own breast, and you shall not be a loser by it. If you know me, you know that I have the power to fully redeem my promise."

"You have!" replied Grif.

"Well, then, if of need I must have some appellative to be known among those who are to do me the service, call me some feigned name."

"John will not suit you," uttered Grif, with a laugh.

The stranger frowned till his eyes were scarcely visible. "Call me Martin du Bois," he ejaculated, harshly.

"As you will," said Grif. "Having settled that point, tell me your service."

"Do you know one Halbert Evesham, who dwells in the little village of Brenchley?" demanded the self-styled Martin du Bois.

"I do, well, returned Grif.

"He has a foster-child."

"Ay, a girl, of extraordinary beauty, named Violet."

"The same," returned Martin.

"Hum! You have seen her, conceived a passion for her, and would have her?"

"You are right."

"And would seek my aid to carry her off?"

"I would."

"Pshaw! man, why do you not make love to the girl, and persuade her to fly with you? it is far the pleasanter, if not the easier method."

"I have tried, and failed. I have reason to believe she loves another, but cannot learn who he is, or ere this he would have been out of my path. I would have employed my own people to carry her off—for she shall be mine! But I wish to leave no trace behind of the manner, or by whom she was taken; and therefore, I come to you to accomplish it for me."

"How do you propose to execute it? I know the girl, though so young, is the idol of the village, and were my people to attempt to take her by force, we should have to storm the place. It does not answer our purpose just now to quarrel with the villagers, and therefore, unless you have some scheme by which we may get her in our power, without fuss or bustle, I would rather decline it."

"Are you growing pious and virtuous, Grif? or are you getting cowardly, that you speak thus?" scornfully demanded Martin.

"I have heard of such things as playing with a lion until you rouse his anger, and your life pays the forfeit of your pleasantry," said Grif, with ill-concealed resentment. "In speaking with me, I would have you remember that."

"Listen to me, Grif, uttered Martin, scarce heeding his angry observation. "I have so conducted myself to the girl, that although she does not love me, she does not hate me, and seems to regret that she cannot return my affection; she pities me, and even wept, when I made her believe my heart was breaking at her indifference. However, she remained firm in refusing the offer of my hand."

"Your hand!" uttered Grif, in unqualified astonishment.

"Ay! Have you to learn that making an offer is not fulfilling it?"

"True: go on," said Grif.

"I therefore told her, as I could not gain her heart, I would quit her for ever, and have arranged for her to meet me to-morrow, on the borders of the wood, to bid her farewell. A few of your men may be in readiness, and when I give the signal, which I will do on quitting her, they can dart forward, seize her, and bear her off; I will then appear at the borders at Tonbridge, and rescue her"—

"Rescue her?" interrupted Grif, surprisedly.

"Yes; I do not wish the girl to think me a party to the abduction," replied Martin; "she would not be so ready to fall into my arms, if she knew that it was by my contrivance she was carried off."

"Likely enough. At what hour will the men be required?" demanded Grif.

"Between two and three, in the afternoon."

"They shall be there; and the pay?"

"An hundred merks; I will place them in your hands as soon as the girl is in my power."

"An hundred merks!" repeated Grif. "If thou wert a common lover, I might accept the sum, but thou art not, and the damsel is peerless—she is worthy a thousand merks. You would not disgrace your choice by offering an hundred merks; it is unworthy of her, of you, and—*I* cannot accept less than a thousand."

"A thousand!" ejaculated Martin, hastily. "Where is thy conscience, Grif, in demanding so large a sum?"

"Conscience!" cried Grif with a laugh; "the less we say of that the better; it was only made for fools

and wishes distressed her; that she could never love and not for such as you and I. A thousand merks is my price, and the damsel is cheap at that; besides, there is a consideration for keeping your secret, independent of giving you the aid. But I throw all the advantages into one lump—one thousand merks or nothing."

"But that I know you to be upright and honest, Grif, I should call it downright robbery," sneered Martin. "However, the money shall be yours."

"The bargain's struck!" uttered Grif. "How many men will you want?"

"Four will suffice," returned Martin, "more might attract attention, and can do no good."

"As you please: you will find my 'devils' close to Brenchley at the appointed time!" exclaimed Grif. "Have you any further commands?"

"Nothing more than to give your men strict charge not to harm or injure the maiden in act or thought, and bid them await me by the gate which leads to Tonbridge Castle; there, on the banks of the stream, I will be: they shall not wait long. After a slight resistance, they must fly."

"I understand. I confess it is dangerous to place so pretty a maiden in the power of my 'devils;' but I will pick out four who shall do your work to your will."

"It is well; let one of your men guide me from this place. Bear in mind, Grif, that now and at all times, in connection with you, I am Martin du Bois. Good night."

"I shall remember. Good night! Nick, guide his —Martin Du Bois, to Brenchley."

As they quitted the spot, Grif fell into a fit of musing, from which, after he had for some time indulged in it, he aroused himself, and said to one of his men—

"Drag the carcase of Mat Snake from the brushwood, and hang him upon a tree, as a warning to those who may wish to follow his example."

He walked slowly away, and the men proceeded to obey his orders; but the body of Mat Snake had vanished, and although they searched for hours, was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER II.

"Her brow was white and low, her cheek's pure dye
Like twilight rosy still with the set sun;
Short upper lip—sweet lips! that make us sigh
Ever to have seen such; for she was one
Fit for the model of a statuary." BYRON.

"A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a tempest's cloven roof—her hair
Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight
Picturing her form—her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new."
SHELLEY.

THE village of Brenchley was situated upon the borders of the Weald, but a short distance from Sussex, the point at which the counties divided being about two or three miles south of it. It was composed of a series of small farms, tenanted chiefly by vassals of the king, the entire Weald being wholly his property. The inhabitants were many for so small a place, and being upon crown land, enjoyed many privileges which were denied to others of their brethren who were not so fortunately situated. Among those who dwelt in Brenchley was a man named Halbert Evesham, who possessed a small but comfortable farm, but did not use it so much as a means of livelihood as of amusement. It was known that he had no necessity to labour at all, yet few in the village had better tilled grounds than his, a neater house, or one better regulated. No one knew aught of him save that he had been among them some twelve or fourteen years, that he had a young child with him when he arrived, and that she had grown up to be the belle of the village. Every one liked him—all spoke well of him; he was ever at hand to assist the sick and distressed, and to counsel those who needed advice. He was not old, but it seemed that some great sorrow had stolen all his gaiety for ever, and settled the characteristics of an age upon him which he had not reached. Every one felt the influence of his quiet, sad, yet pleasing manner upon them, when he joined them in their assemblages; and his kind words, to which a charm was added by the mild, calm tone of his voice, were all listened to with the profoundest respect and attention. That there was much curiosity among them, as to who he was and where he came from, cannot be denied; yet it never assumed that impertinent form which thrusts its nose, and never rests until it has pryed into every circumstance, every little hole and corner of one's life, in order to become possessed of the power of being "Sir Oracle" whenever the name by any chance gets mentioned; the villagers of Brenchley were contented to be no wiser respecting Halbert Evesham than he wished them to be; they saw that any recurrence to his early life gave him pain, and therefore abstained from any allusion to it. Go where he would, he was welcomed with an affectionate greeting, and when his name was spoken, it was always coupled with a kind word.

Violet Evesham, his foster-child, was, as Grif of the Bloody Hand had said, the idol of the village; there was not a lad in Brenchley who would not have tossed his cap to the skies, and declared himself ready to die for her; there was not a girl who did not feel proud—and not envious, notwithstanding her rare beauty—to be in her company. Violet, who could think, judge, and act for herself, dressed and fashioned her garments as her whims and taste directed her; and as that taste happened to be of a first-rate order, she led the fashions among the demoiselles of Brenchley. She never appeared with a new arrangement of ribbon, coif, or cote-hardie, but every damsel in the village, who could, adopted it. Every door flew open as she appeared, while beaming faces, glowing with pleasure at the sight of her, were her welcome; hands and voices vied, and almost quarrelled with each other, in fondly greeting her. It was the pure love of a large family for a dear sister. Well did she appreciate it, and affectionately was it returned. There was not a smile or kind word thrown away upon her, and if the whole village idolised her, she gratefully returned the compliment. Had she possessed no personal charms, the sweetness of her disposition, and the graces of her mind, would have fully justified the affection with which she was regarded. But, united as those charming qualities were to a person singularly beautiful, it would have been, indeed, remarkable if she had not been looked upon as the pride of the village, and worshipped accordingly.

Description ever falls short of reality; it may be given in glowing words, in polished, graceful, vivid, stirring language, but it can never excite to the amount of feeling raised by the actual sight and bodily presence of the thing described. It was said of Sir

Philip Sidney's writings, that they stirred the heart like the sound of a trumpet: and we would that we had a power as graphic, to describe the peerless charms of this most lovely maiden.

Nature, when she makes up her graceful mind to be bounteous, like a truly generous donor, places no restriction upon her liberality; she does not do her work by halves. Violet was a *chef d'œuvre*: she was seventeen, rather above the middle height, with a figure which might be termed a faultless model of beautiful female form; the perfection of symmetry was displayed in every limb; every line of her slight, slim figure was flowing, wavy, and chaste; her motions were identified with elegance, and, like the movements of a young fawn, were instinct with a natural grace; her face was—how to describe it?—we have called upon our memory for one similar, have run through the works of Raphael, Guido, Carlo Dolci, and a host of old and favourite masters, yet, albeit we found many almost to adore, we lighted not upon one like unto Violet's; her face was the incarnation of loveliness. Her eyes—we will describe the eyes first—we have a passion for beautiful eyes. It is by the eye, more than by word or act, that we first learn a kindliness of feeling exists for us; the eye is the soul of language and the language of the soul; no words can equal it in richness of meaning: it conveys far more than words ever can or will do; a look of love is more sweet than a loving word—a glance of contempt more bitter than a contumelious exclamation. It is much easier to say "I love you!" with the eyes than the tongue; and though enthusiasm and earnestness may lend a fervency to the words, the same feeling will be more powerfully embodied in glances that burn as they are given. Sweet eyes! Violet's eyes were blue—decided blue—clear, liquid blue—the same colour which we see in the skies of England once or twice—never more, during the year, somewhere about the close of May—pure, unalloyed, and transparent as crystal. Such were Violet's eyes. They were framed by full eyelids, and curtained by long, dark, silken eyelashes—we say curtained, for the lashes were so long and profuse, that when she looked down, she seemed sleeping. Her nose was straight and thin, exactly the same form which the Grecian sculptors delighted in, and produced with such success. Her lips rather small—because her mouth was so—were perfect in shape, and divine in colour; neither ruby nor vermilion resembled them, but a combination of both—all the richness of one, the delicacy of the other, and more transparent than either; the upper lip was thin, but the nether one was full and pulpy, and made you think of peaches and nectarines, and such fruit as we read of in fairy tales, but never see. Her teeth were whiter than ivory, regular and even to a degree; but white as were Violet's teeth, they were not whiter than her complexion, or clearer or more free from blemish—and they were spotless; it was exquisitely delicate, and so pellucid, that the thin blue veins might be traced here and there in all their variety of fanciful forms; her cheeks were coloured with the hue of health, and no more; there is a faint pink in Indian shells which approaches nearer than any other tint to it, and those who have seen one may imagine the other. Her forehead was high and open, and seemed chiselled from Parian marble. Her hair was fair and shining, descending in long curls upon her graceful shoulders—occasionally confined in a coif, though rarely, mostly being suffered to fall free and unrestrained, for every breeze to sport with: sometimes a fillet of ribbon decorated it, but then it looked as well without it as with it. Her hands and feet were very small and beautifully shapen: thus completing a catalogue of beauties, which, combined, were the realization of perfect loveliness.

Martin du Bois visited Brenchley upon an errand which will be hereafter explained. He heard Violet's praise repeated ere he had been in the village a few hours; his curiosity was roused, he sought her, and as he strolled through the village he met her, in the midst of a group of young merry girls who were accompanying her in a stroll. She burst upon his sight like a gleam of sunshine upon flowers; he was rivetted to the spot; he had eyes for none but her. The eulogiums of the villagers were, indeed, well founded; he gazed until everything but her faded from his sight; his heart beat tumultuously. Laughing gleefully, she and her gladsome companions swept by him, an open door received them, and then they were hidden from his sight. He still gazed upon the spot where she disappeared, as if his eyes could pierce the opacity of the door, and give her again to his sight. He remained thus for a minute, then drew a long breath, and muttering—

"St. Mary! how lovely!" relapsed again into an attitude of deep thought, from which he was aroused by her appearance from the cottage she had entered. She was alone, but waved her hand as she quitted it, as a token of farewell, and ran laughingly to the spot where he stood. His heart beat quick and violently as she approached, and just as she was passing, he arrested her progress by uttering, in a voice quivering with nervous excitement—

"Maiden! hist! a word with thee; I prithee stay."

Obedient to his wish, she stopped, and made a slight graceful acknowledgment of the profound salutation which he made her. He advanced to her, and in a low voice said—

"I cry thy mercy, fair damsel, for staying thee, but I would fain learn, being a stranger here, the residence of one Halbert Evesham, who dwelleth in this village. Will you favour me, if you know such an one, by directing me thither?"

"I do know such an one, sir; you will confess I do, when I tell you I am his daughter—"

"His daughter! you then are Violet Evesham?" he interrupted, quickly.

Violet bowed her head with a smile.

"Fool that I am, I ought to have known it," he muttered.

"I am returning home, and if you will accompany me, you shall see him," said Violet.

"A thousand thanks, sweet maiden. I have matters of some importance to transact with him, and would lose no time in meeting with him. I am ready, so please you."

Martin accompanied her home; he had an interview with her father. Again and again he came; until Violet began to wish he had never come, and for two reasons. First, that he declared himself passionately in love with her; and secondly, that each time he came her father seemed plunged in the profoundest melancholy at the result of their interview. She grieved at the second more than the first. She was of too sweet a nature to feel offended with him, because she had found favour in his eyes, and felt much pained to think she could never return his love, as her inability to do so caused him apparently to suffer deeply. Strongly, passionately, did he urge his suit, and as each day she continued to feel less inclined to love him, she grew more distressed at every repetition of it. At last, one day, during the temporary absence of her foster-father, he threw himself at her feet, and urged her by every species of rhetoric in his power to be his. It was then she burst into tears, and told him how his words

him, and that if he did not wish her to hate him, he would cease importuning her. She wished to speak and think of him kindly; but if he persisted in urging his suit, she had but the alternative of speaking to her father, and thus effectually putting a stop to his visits for ever.

"Am I to blame, Violet?" he exclaimed earnestly, "that I love you—madly love you? Am I to blame that my eyes have given you to my heart, and made me thine, body and soul—now and for ever? Turn not your eyes from me, Violet; do not weep—I cannot bear to see you weep; I would not be the cause of tears or pain to thee for worlds."

"And yet you make me more wretched than I ever felt before, said Violet, almost sobbing. "I am sorry that I should have been the cause of suffering to you, as you teach me to think I have; but remember, Martin, I have been unwillingly, nay, unconsciously so. I regret you should have permitted yourself to become thus the victim of a passion which I can never—never return."

"Do not say 'never!'" cried Martin, passionately.

"I repeat it, Martin—never!" replied Violet, firmly. And then changing the tone of her voice to one of tender appeal, as she saw him writhe at her last words, continued—"Leave this place, Martin; you are a stranger here, your family, friends, and home, as you have often told me, are far from hence; rejoin them, and forget that such a being as Violet Evesham ever lived."

"Look you, Violet," returned Martin, mournfully, "my love for you pains you to hear of it—distresses you. I have brought tears where it would have been to me gladness—delight to have placed smiles; you have denied me even the hope that time might soften your heart towards me, for you have told me you could never—never return my love. Well, be it so; deeply and dearly as I love you, and would give up all in life to have thy love, yet would I rather suffer all the anguish which hopeless love inflicts, than wound thy feelings by urging thee to grant to me what thou hast declared thou can'st ne'er bestow. If you cannot love me, you may respect me. I will do as you wish me; I will quit this place—probably for ever. Do not ask me to forget you, 'tis impossible; as well might you tear my heart from my body and expect me to breathe and live on; in my heart you dwell, Violet, and while it beats you will reign there. To-morrow I will leave Brenchley, and soon after quit England for the wars; when I am gone, think sometimes kindly of me, as one who worshipped nothing in life as thee, and would sacrifice that life to make thee happy. I entered this village unknown, have remained so, and would quit it unnoticed; will you meet me, dear Violet, at the outskirts of the village, at the first beech tree as you enter the wood, there to take my last farewell of you?"

"You act wisely and kindly," said Violet, affected by his words, "and indeed I thank thee sincerely for coming to this resolution. But let us part now—I will think of thee often, and pray for thee; pray thy peace of mind may be restored by some fair one, far lovelier, far better than I am! It is useless to meet again after what has passed, and so let us say farewell now, Martin."

"You do refuse me this small boon, then; 'tis little, methinks, to grant to one who is prepared to sacrifice all his earthly happiness for thee," said Martin, reproachfully.

"I would not have you think me ungenerous, Martin," she responded; "but I confess I can only see a prolonging of pain to both, were I to grant your request. Say farewell now—it is better we should part at once."

"Perhaps it is—I will even acknowledge it is," said Martin; "but I cannot quit the village until to-morrow, and I would that I saw thee the last of all that pertains to it; that as I quit it for ever, my eye may light on thee. It is my last request. You are silent still—well; I had hoped that—no matter. Violet, I have something to communicate to thee, respecting thy foster father; it is of much importance, concerning his welfare and safety."

"Why not tell him?" cried Violet, earnestly.

"I cannot; it would nullify the good I seek to do him; and if thou wilt meet me at the spot I mention, I will communicate it to you—you only must hear—you only can save him."

"Heavens! what means this mystery? Speak, Martin; tell me, is my father in danger," cried Violet, agitatedly.

"He is!" replied Martin.

"From what? from whom?" she hurriedly inquired.

"I cannot disclose it until to-morrow," he replied. "I have taken some steps to prevent harm occurring to him—to-night I shall know with what success; to-morrow I will impart it to thee, if thou wilt meet me. Wilt thou come?"

"I will. Pray heaven avert the danger from him!" she cried, distractedly.

"I shall expect thee: till then, farewell!" Without another word he quitted the cottage, and that night he visited "Grif of the Bloody Hand."

CHAPTER III.

"He was past, all mirth or woe
Nothing more remained below
But sleepless nights and heavy days,
A mind all dead to scorn or praise,
A heart which shunned itself—and yet,
That would not yield—nor could forget;
Which, when it least appear'd to melt,
Intently thought—intensely felt."

BYRON.

THE following morning, a youth, armed with a hunting-spear and a short sword, proceeded through the forest in search of game. A huge wolf sprang from a lair upon him as he sauntered carelessly along, with such suddenness, as to deprive him of his spear, and the chance of resisting its attack with success. The unexpected dash against him, coupled with the great weight of the ferocious animal, hurled him like lightning to the ground. Although the shock was severe, it did not deprive him of all power; he threw up his arms with a vigorous exertion, and succeeded in flinging the wolf from him, ere he could fix his teeth. Before he could rise, the wolf sprang again upon him, striving with all his power to bury his fangs in the youth's throat; but he was seized by the neck with a powerful grasp, and held as if in a vice. He struggled, kicked, and howled fearfully, but in vain; he could not release himself from the firm grip of his prostrate antagonist.

"No, no!" exclaimed the youth coolly, although he panted a little from his exertion, "you will not get away so easily, my fine fellow. This is a matter of life for life. The Holy Mother grant victory to the worthiest, and that is me, seeing I am a Christian, and you are nothing but a bloody-minded brute. Hold still for a little while, and give me fair play; let me get my breath, and then we'll at it."

The wolf struggled desperately, accompanying his plunges by fierce howls, essaying madly to bite with his enormous fangs, of which he made a constant display. The youth, however, for a few moments, made no effort to throw him off; his grasp on the neck of the beast was one of iron, and instead of endeavouring to extricate himself from his dangerous position, he amused himself by grinning in the face of the brute each time it roared and gnashed its teeth. He remained thus for near two minutes, and then, by a prodigious exertion, he raised himself half up. Then began the struggle for the mastery. The wolf was too large and too powerful to be easily flung off, and the youth felt he must regain his feet ere he could effectually defend himself. The wolf did his best to prevent this, and each struggling desperately, they rolled over and over; the youth uttering fierce, short, angry exclamations, the wolf growling in concert. It would have been difficult for a spectator to have decided which had the best of the conflict, for each was uppermost in turns. Suddenly the youth appeared upon his knees, and retained his position. Holding the wolf down, with a strong effort he succeeded in getting one of his knees upon its throat, and then, with the quickness of thought, removed his right hand, drew his short sword, and plunged it into its body. He repeated the blow several times, still retaining his hold, until the long mad howls which it gave ceased; the limbs relaxed, though they still

quivered, and the absence of all resistance told him his enemy was dead.

"The Mother of God be praised for the victory!" he cried, rising and panting for breath, while he wiped the large drops of perspiration from his brow. "Phew! it was hard work. Once or

twice, when his villanous jaws were close to my face, I fancied he licked his chops in anticipation of making a meal of me. However, my time has not yet come, nor do I mean it should yet awhile; nor in this fashion. By the mass! it would have been awkward to have paid my visit to Purgatory thus early in my life, after having just served as a dinner to a blood-thirsty, thievish, sneaking brute," he concluded, kicking the carcase with his foot. He wiped his sword upon the shaggy coat of the wolf, sheathed it, picked up his spear, and turned to depart, when to his surprise, he discovered a man, in the garb of Grif's band, facing him. He started at the unexpected sight, but grasped his weapon firmly, and prepared to defend himself in case of attack.

"Fear not," uttered the sombre stranger, noticing the youth's movement.

"I do not," he replied.

"'Tis well. You live in Brenchley?" he interrogated.

"I do," returned the youth. "What then?"

"You have lived long there?" said his interrogator.

"Nearly all my life," was the reply. "Why do you ask?"

"You shall know if you will follow me to a short distance from hence, where we may not be seen."

"We are not likely to be seen here, save by some of your companions," exclaimed the youth.

"My companions! uttered the stranger, scornfully. "Yes," he cried, grinding his teeth and clenching his fist, "they shall find how I will companion with them!"

"You wear their garb," ejaculated the youth, astonished at the fierce hatred exhibited in the countenance of the stranger at the mention of the band.

"Ay! but that is my affair. Let it suffice you to know I am not one of the crew; that I hate them with the deadliest hatred ever implanted in the breast of man against his fellow, and even now seek you as a means of thwarting a piece of villany they are hatching. Follow me; I know thou hast the courage to trust thyself with me, and to do the deed I shall propose to you; I saw the whole of your encounter with yon huge beast, and that decided me in engaging you to execute what I am about to commission thee with."

"I can't say much about my courage, sir stranger," observed the youth, quietly; "but this I know—I'd do my best were my life in danger from man or beast, or risk my life to preserve those I love from harm."

"I have seen enough to make me believe as much," remarked the stranger.

"Marry, if you saw my tussle with this beast, you might have lent a helping hand," said the youth.

"You did not need it," was the response. "Had the danger been greater, you should not have suffered for want of my aid;—but time is flying—will you follow me?"

"Lead on," uttered the youth. With his spear in one hand, and sword ready for instant use, he followed the sable stranger, who instantly availing himself of the assent, led the way through coverts and thickets, until he reached a small copse studded thickly with trees of all kinds. Having assured himself that there were none but himself and the youth in sight or hearing, he motioned to his companion to seat himself at the foot of a tree, which having obeyed, he threw himself beside him, and commenced speaking in a low voice.

"You live in the village of Brenchley, you have told me. Will you tell me your name?"

"I have no objection to do so, for I am not ashamed of it, nor shall I ever be, I hope."

"I hope not."

"I think I am sure not; but before I tell it to you, I should like to know the meaning of all this mystery."

"A few minutes will explain it all; I pledge my word you shall know, and will acknowledge, when you do, that I am justified in asking these questions, and also in assuming this caution."

"I suppose it is as you say. Well, my name is Walter, or, as the lads call me for short, Wat; I am the son of Martin the Tyler."

"Well, Wat Tyler, you are about twenty, I presume?"

"No," returned Wat, "I am seventeen."

"No more!" exclaimed the stranger, with surprise, "and yet with so powerful a frame!"

"I don't know about that; I only know I am just seventeen. My birthday was yesterday, and rare fun I had, too," answered Wat.

"No matter, seventeen or twenty, you are sufficiently stalwart for my purpose," muttered the stranger, and then, raising his voice, said—"I need not ask you if you know Halbert Evesham?"

"Do I know my right hand; do I know my mother's voice, or my own name? uttered Wat, somewhat contemptuously.

"I am answered," ejaculated the stranger. "Do you know who and what he was before he came to Brenchley?"

"No," returned Wat, "nor any one else in the village."

"I do," said the stranger.

"You?" cried Wat, with astonishment.

"Ay! I repeat it, I do, and I will tell you. Some twenty years since he was the steward of a young nobleman whose name I shall not mention, for the time has not yet arrived for that disclosure. He was then in his twenty-third year, and of a very prepossessing appearance; he fell in love with the daughter of one of the vassals who was the principal attendant upon the young wife of the nobleman he served, and she returned his affection. She was very beautiful, and had many suitors, among whom, it was said, the noble himself figured; they were, however, all rejected, and ultimately she was united to Halbert; the noble, his master, assisted at the wedding, and gave him a farm as a wedding portion, to which he retired with his wife, as blessed as man could be. But his felicity was not doomed to last. Upon his return one day from a hunt, to which he had accompanied his master, he found two faithful servants slaughtered, and his wife nowhere to be seen. He was almost horror-stricken at the sight of his murdered dependants, and alarmed almost to madness at the absence of his wife. He searched every part of the house, calling her frantically by name, but no response was made to his cries, save the echo of his own voice as it rang through the deserted chambers. His search was vain—she was gone, and not a trace left by which to track her. In a state of mind bordering on frenzy, he threw himself upon his steed, and galloped at the top of the horse's speed to the castle. He gained admittance, he waited for no announcement; but, leaving his steed in the court-yard, he dashed up the stairs, and entered his lord's presence, without observing any of the customary observances of respect. The noble was still in his hunting dress, even as he had quitted the wood, and looked with astonishment on the sudden appearance of his servitor. With a face white to ashyness, and his whole demeanour that of one distracted, Halbert clasped his hands together, threw himself upon his

knees to his master, and after in vain essaying to speak, buried his face in his hands and burst into tears. The young noble raised him, and at length obtained from him the cause of his anguish and prayers for assistance; the latter he immediately granted, and a troop of horse were summoned. Halbert placed himself at their head; they scoured the country for miles, and next morning, worn out with fatigue, the steeds scarce able to crawl from over exertion, they returned, having been unsuccessful in their pursuit. His master apparently took great interest in the affair; for more than a week the search was kept up with great perseverance, the young noble occasionally taking part in it, and as well offered a great reward to any one who should bring tidings by which she might be recovered; but in vain.

"What! could they not ascertain with all this exertion what became of her?" inquired Wat, much interested in the story.

"You shall hear," continued the stranger. "About three weeks after her disappearance, a man came to Halbert, offering, upon payment of the reward, to disclose to him what had become of his wife. Halbert agreed, and appointed the evening to produce the sum, as the man refused to disclose a syllable until the money was within his grasp. Halbert hastened to the young noble, related what had occurred, and received the money to pay the reward. However, the man did not keep his appointment, and was next morning found dead, floating in the moat which surrounded the castle, with his throat cut."

"How extraordinary!" interrupted Wat.

"So every one thought," continued the stranger. "The youngnoble set on foot every inquiry respecting the murdered man, but with as little success as he had met with in his search for Halbert's wife. Time passed on; nothing further arose which had the remotest connection with his loss, and he sat him down by his lone hearth, a desolate, broken-hearted man. Four years elapsed, during nearly the whole of which period the nobleman, his master, had been away from his castle, leaving Halbert in charge of it. One night he was awakened from his sleep by the crying of an infant; he sprung from his bed upon hearing the cry repeated with such distinctness; it absolved his mind from all doubt of its being a dream, and hastily procuring a light, he found a small wicker basket placed upon a chair near his bed, containing a female child, scarcely a twelvemonth old. Attached to its neck was a small scroll, which upon opening he found to contain these words.—

"Halbert Evesham, this child is entrusted to thy care by one for whom thou wouldst once have hazarded life and happiness; for one who never ceases to pray for thee; one whom, if thou shouldst never again meet on earth, trusts with the fondest hope and yearning of a blighted heart, to meet thee in Heaven. Cherish and tend this child as though it was a holy charge from thy Maker to thee; suffer no harm or danger to come near it, while thou hast life and strength. Do this for the sake of all you ever held dear, and you shall one day be rewarded with that thou dost most hope for. Seek not to know who the child is, or how it came to thee, or *why* it was entrusted to *thee;* the time will come when thou shalt know all, but till then be satisfied to know no more than thou art already acquainted with. Quit this castle at once and for ever; your life is in danger each moment you are in it. Make any excuse to avoid suspicion of your knowledge of this, but above all, let no soul know that you have the child until you are far from this. Fail not, as you wish to give happiness to one who feels bitterly its want; and if it is in thy gentle nature, Halbert, to hate aught, bear the most inextinguishable, deadly hatred to him thou hast served so long and faithfully; nourish it, cherish it, but do not display it until thou canst do it effectually. A more execrable villain breathes not than the noble thou servest, and thou of all men owest him the deepest, most unrelenting, unmitigated loathing; why, thou shalt know when other things are explained to thee. Keep thy trust, be secret, and quit this hated place for ever. Farewell! if there is a happiness beyond all imagining, which may be bestowed on mortal, Heaven is hourly implored that it may be thine."

Halbert perused and re-perused these lines again and again. What passed through his mind he alone knew; but at that dead hour of night he saddled one of the swiftest steeds in the stable, and bearing the child with him, he quitted the castle. When he returned at daybreak he was alone."

"Why, you don't mean to say he murdered it?" cried Wat, with a sudden start.

"Pshaw!" returned the other, "no! In two days his master returned; Halbert requested permission to leave him, alleging as an excuse the miserable recollections the place conjured up. Almost to his surprise, the noble consented eagerly, and made him a large present. Halbert left him and his castle from that hour, and with the young child he journeyed from place to place, until at last he came here into Kent."

"Then Violet Evesham is this child?" suggested Wat.

"She is," replied his companion. "And now let me ask you a question. You know her well?"

"I should think so; we were playmates as children," said Wat.

"You love her?" interrupted the stranger, looking fixedly at him.

"As my right arm!" exclaimed Wat, returning the look by a steady gaze.

"And would hazard much in her service?" questioned the stranger.

"Life and limb!" cried Wat, enthusiastically.

"How would you stand affected to him who would endeavour to tear her from her home, and by force do her so foul a wrong, as to make her weep tears of blood, could she shed them?"

"Why, I'd cut him down like a reed!" cried Wat, with startling energy. "I'd hew him to pieces. By Heaven! I would not treat the rankest beast that ever crawled so foully as I'd use him!" His eyes sparkled as he uttered this with almost supernatural brightness, and the crimson flush which passed across his burning brow, evinced how truly he felt all he uttered.

"Why, that's spoken like a noble heart," said the stranger. "There is one, Wat, who seeks to do this, and it is to thwart him in his vile purpose that I apply for thy assistance; and have disclosed Halbert Evesham's story to thee in order to interest thee more deeply in her behalf, if there had been need of it, which I am glad to find there is not."

"There *is* such a villain? who, what, and where is he?" cried Wat, grasping his weapons, and half rising as if he would go in instant pursuit of him.

"Bide thee still, thou shalt meet him, but 'tis not yet time. I myself have somewhat to do in this affair, which requires some little preparation," returned the stranger.

"Who art thou, who art acquainted with all these things?" demanded Wat.

"My own safety forbids me telling thee," his com-

panion replied; "know me only as a friend to Halbert Evesham, to his beautiful foster-child, and to thee. But come, I see by the sun the time approaches when we should be up and doing; follow me. I will tell thee what is designed against the fair one's honour, and of the means of preventing it." So saying, he rose from the grass on which he had been lying, and led the way, followed by his young companion, deeper into the forest.

The sun had quitted the meridian rather better than two hours, when Martin du Bois hastened to keep his appointment with the gentle Violet. With a light step, he took his way through the wood, and he chuckled as he anticipated the entire success of his scheme. Suddenly his path was crossed by a youth, who, standing directly before him, bade him stop. Looking fiercely upon his [detainer, Martin cried angrily—

"Out of my path!"

"Not until we are better acquainted," cried Wat, for it was he who confronted Martin.

"Out of my path, boor, slave, serf!" roared Martin, in haughty indignation. The words barely left his lips, ere he was felled like lightning to the ground, by a blow from Wat.

"Liar!" he cried, as he bestowed the blow; "I am neither one nor the other."

"Dog!" shouted Martin, springing to his feet, and drawing his sword, "thy heart's blood shall pay for this!" and he rushe dmadly upon Wat with his drawn weapon. The latter, however, was prepared, and stood upon his defence with the short sword which had inflicted so summary a fate upon the wolf. Furiously Martin laid about him, and Wat had all his work to do to parry the fierce and rapid thrusts of his antagonist. He stood only on the defensive, until Martin grew exhausted from his violent exertions, and then Wat plied him so vigorously that he speedily disarmed him. He sprung upon him, seized him by the throat, and threw him to the ground, vowing that if he made the slightest movement of alarm or escape he would run him through instantly. Then drawing from his girdle a thick cloth, which was folded and fastened round with a long thong of leather, he unfolded it, and tied it tightly all round Martin's head, effectually blindfolding, and at the same time gagging him. Martin was at a loss to conjecture the motive for this attack; he plainly perceived that Wat was no robber, and yet, being an entire stranger, to what else could he attribute his conduct. He tried to remember whether he had ever seen him before, and had done him any wrong; but no! there was not a lineament in his face he could recognise; and as plunder did not appear to be the object of his being treated thus, he could not but deem Wat's proceeding as one which was as incomprehensible as it was successful. To these speculations as to the cause of his situation was added the emotions of rage and disappointment; in hastening to meet Violet, he had amused himself by calculating the ease with which, after he had her completely in his power, he could overcome her scruples. Away from all friends, no chance, no hope of ever being restored to them, with a young and ardent lover always with her, pleading his cause with fervour and enthusiasm, he was certain, he fondly imagined, to make her consent to become his in every sense of the word; but even should it fail, he resolved that what was not granted to persuasion should be obtained by force. He had laid his plans so well, everything having as yet fulfilled his expectations, that the possibility of being completely thwarted at the last moment was a matter which had never crossed his imagination; to be thwarted thus, too, by a youth several years his junior, without any visible cause for his conduct, made him chafe and rage inwardly with the direst fury. All his attempts to get free from the grasp of his conqueror were fruitless; he was held with such strength that he was actually powerless. Was there no means of escape—no chance of ascertaining the cause of this proceeding, and bribing the youth to set him free? There was no time to be lost, for Wat bound his arms behind him as firmly as he had his head in the cloth.

"Why have you done this? What is the meaning of this extraordinary behaviour?" he exclaimed. He received no answer, but was raised to his feet by a powerful jerk, and impelled forward by a line attached to that which fastened his arm. He concluded that the cloth had rendered his voice inaudible, and again spoke, or rather shouted—

"What is your motive for treating me thus? Let me free. I will reward you handsomely, if you will. Name your sum, and I will treble it, if you let me go. If money be your object, I swear that, so long as thou dost live, thou shalt not want it."

There was still no answer, nor any cessation in his constrained progress; again he cried, louder than before, as his case grew more urgent—

"Let me but free, and I will, I swear by all that is holy, lavish gold upon thee and thine. I will not only forgive what thou hast done, but be thy friend for ever. You know not what pressing matters you are ruining by thus detaining me." Here he thought he heard a slight laugh from Wat.

"This is no time for jocularity," he urged; "thou art no robber, I am assured of that; and what wrong have I done thee? None! Thou hast mistaken me for another person. Ah, by heaven! that must be it! Youth, look again upon me. Art sure I am he for whom thou dost take me?"

"Yes!" thundered Wat in his ear, "I am sure thou art the hound I take thee for; and know, scoundrel! that this is thy punishment for attempting a vile wrong to Violet Evesham. I will not stain my sword with thy base blood, but will leave the wolves to inflict upon thee the death, thou dog! which thou dost so richly merit." A passionate prayer for mercy from Martin was unheeded. He was dragged violently along, until Wat reached the loneliest, wildest, most desolate spot he knew in the wood. He bound him strongly to a tree, and then, without uttering a word in reply to his abject supplications for release, accompanied, as they were, by princely offers, protestations, and oaths of abandoning his wicked scheme, he turned his back upon him, and left him to his fate.

CHAPTER IV.

"The lady's cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim."

JOHN KEATS.

VIOLET EVESHAM passed the night on which Martin du Bois quitted her to seek Grif of the Bloody Hand, sleeplessly; she was agitated by a thousand frightful anticipations of undefined ill to her foster-father; she conjured up danger in every shape and form, and imagined him to be

liable to each as in turn it arose. Pale and harassed by her emotions and want of rest, she left her couch in the morning, and sought the presence of her father. His fond eyes soon detected the colourless cheeks and heavy eye which she exhibited, and affectionately he inquired the cause: it rose to her lips on the impulse of the moment, but she checked it, and said—

"It is nothing; I slept ill; I had some terrible dreams, they frightened me, and—and—that is all."

"It was foolish, my dear child!" exclaimed Halbert, kindly, "to suffer a mere vision of the imagination to affect you to such an extent; I had thought my Violet to possess more strength of mind. You must shake this weakness from you; hie thee to some of thy friends, and laugh the phantoms out of thy memory. See how lovely the day is! a ramble in the sweet fresh air among the green beauties of nature will soon restore thy mind to its proper tone. Come, Violet, kiss me, and let me see thee smile—ay, that is my own child again. I must quit thee for a short time, my love."

"Quit me?" cried Violet, in a tone of alarm.

"Ay, Violet," he returned, rather surprised at her startled manner, "I shall only be away from you for a few hours. I have a slight matter to arrange with a friend at Lamberhurst, which must be done to-day."

"Is it not possible to defer it?" she inquired anxiously.

"No," he replied; "but why do you ask? Is there anything so extraordinary in my quitting you for a few hours, that you shou'd exhibit such concern? for your voice and manner tell me that you feel some strange anxiety about my leaving you. Ah, I see what it is, Violet, you have not yet shaken off the influence of those absurd dreams. I suppose you dreamed that some wolf attacked me, or some wild bull gored me to death; absolve yourself at once from their influence, my love, or the weakness may grow upon you. Believe me, I amnot the less safe because you have had some such dreams."

"But might it not be a warning, dear father," she urged, feeling an indefinable sense of dread of some danger which would overtake him if he quitted her.

"Not of sufficient strength to make me defer my journey, my dear child," he returned. "I lament that you should suffer your native strength of mind to be influenced by such creations of the brain—phantoms of a sleeping imagination. Think no more of it—it is unworthy of you. I am at all times, even as is the meanest thing upon earth, under the especial protection of Providence; if harm befall me, it will be by the Divine will: I am satisfied of this, and suffer not even the foreboding of ill, which we all feel more or less, to affect me. Let me see, when I return, that thy merry friends, and thine own good sense, have chased away the gloom thy troubled dreams have produced. God bless thee, my child, farewell!" so saying, he kissed her tenderly, and, attired in his hat and cloak, with a stout staff in his hand, he walked out into the sunshine, leaving her alone.

He could not have left his dwelling a hundred yards behind him, ere she felt impelled to fetch him back, and at once disclose to him all that Martin du Bois had uttered; but then Martin had said that the good would be nullified by her foster-father being made acquainted that he was in danger—that she alone could save him, and that he would, when she met him, tell her the result of his exertions in Halbert's favour. She prayed for the time to arrive which would set her mind at ease. Instead of obeying Halbert's wish that she should seek the fresh air as a restorative, she remained within the house until the appointed hour came, and then, avoiding the village, she repaired to the spot he had named for their meeting.

She reached it rather before the time agreed upon, but she waited patiently until long after it had passed away; she grew weary with anxiety at his non-appearance, coupling her father's danger with his absence. An hour passed on, still Martin came not, and her solicitude increased proportionably. Once or twice she fancied that she saw a pair of glittering eyes glaring at her from a thicket close by the spot upon which she stood, but they vanished so speedily that she dismissed it from her mind as a creation of fancy. Two hours fled; still was Martin absent. She suffered all the agonies of suspense in their acutest form. Independent of the apprehension she felt at his absence, there was another cause for alarm which affected her in no slight degree. Twice or thrice again had she seen the eyes; the last time with a clearness which set doubt at rest. She concluded their possessor to be a wolf, who only waited for her movement to depart to spring upon her. Upon arriving at this conclusion, upon the impulse she changed her position, and distinctly saw the leaves shake as if moved by some animal who was among them. She also heard a suppressed murmur, resembling a low growl. Her heart beat loud and fast; she felt cold, and sick with fear. She was rooted to the spot, without the power to move a limb. She fixed her eye upon the thicket; the low murmuring still continued; the leaves grew more agitated than before; not a living creature was near her to offer her aid. She saw a dark form rise swiftly from the thicket, and bound towards her; she gave one long agonised shriek, fell upon her knees essaying a prayer, but her senses failed her—everything seemed to fly round, and she sunk upon the ground in a swoon.

The form which Violet had mistaken for a wolf, was, as the reader may imagine, one of Grif's band. He was followed by three companions, who glided after him, and Violet had scarcely reached the ground, ere she was lifted from it by the foremost, and supported in his arms. He detached her head-dress to give her air, but the swoon was so strong, it seemed to have no effect.

"By St. Paul," cried one of the men, "the girl's dead! Your ugly jowl, Quintal, has killed her. Your visage would be invaluable to henpecked husbands, if you can, as it seems, kill a woman with a look."

"Be marvellous for once," replied he whom the first speaker had designated Quintal, "and keep thy tongue from wagging. The girl's only in a faint—she'll soon be out of it. Marry, if I was a young man, I would kiss her out of it; but my time for such foolery has gone."

"Mine has not," exclaimed one of the four, advancing, "and if such a pleasant medicine will bring her to, here goes—

"Stand off, fool!" roared Quintal, still holding Violet in his arms; with his foot upraised he thrust the fellow violently back as he attempted to put into effect his proposition. "Stand off! do you think a face like this was ever made to come in contact with such a hell-born imp's visage as thine? If you don't wish to have a swing by the neck from the highest tree in the wood, you will not put one of your paws on this maiden, except as according to orders. Grif's were, that we were to treat her as tenderly as a mother would her infant, and those orders shall be obeyed."

"Not you, nor Grif himself, shall prevent me doing as I please with the girl," shouted the fellow, rushing forward, madly enraged at the kick he received, which had nearly hurled him to the ground.

"Keep off!" thundered Quintal, "or, by Satan!

I'll drive ten inches of this blade among your cursed ribs," and he whipped out a knife, with a blade twelve inches in length, from his girdle, as he spoke.

"Idiot!" exclaimed one of the men, seizing the fellow who was rushing on Quintal, "how many lives have you, that you should hazard your neck thus? you know it's death to disobey orders; and we were picked out of the band because we should obey Grif's command to the letter. Are you mad, that you act thus?

"Mad or not mad," roared the enraged devil, "I'll take a kick from no one; he shall pay the insult with his blood."

"Hold off, I tell you, man! Would you make a brawl almost in sight of the village? Come, this Martin du Bois does not appear; let us to Tonbridge, and there await him."

"I'll not submit to be kicked, without instantly washing out the stain in his blood who does me the indignity," cried the kicked devil.

"You shall have the chance, I promise you," said Quintal. "When I have executed Grif's commands, I'll kick you again. I never give a dog anything but a kick, unless he much offends me; then he tastes my cold steel. Wait, fool, until your duty is performed, and then, if you will be so prodigal of your heart's blood, I'll teach thee a way to pour it out without leaving me the necessity, or even the chance, of repeating my lesson."

"You brag mightily," sneered the offended devil, chafing at the coolness exhibited by Quintal; "and tongue me as though you were an oak talking to a reed. But large as your words are, I'll make you eat them at the point of my weapon; or my name is not Growl."

"Ay, growl but not bite," jeered Quintal.

"Let us have no more of this boy's play," interposed he who had already interfered, "but away at once. We have no time to waste in brawling. If Grif should happen to be near at hand, which he often is when he wants a deed well done, he will treat you both to the same fate as he gave Mat Snake. The girl is still senseless. There's a spring near here. A little cold water will restore her to life. Lead on, Quintal!"

"I am ready, Belitre," said Quintal; "but it is as well at all times, when you have the opportunity, to teach snarling curs good manners."

"By hell! Quintal," roared Growl, "another such word, and in spite of orders, Grif, or the Devil himself, I'll cleave your skull in twain!"

"Pshaw! put up your sword," exclaimed Belitre, seizing Growl by the arm, as he furiously approached Quintal; "you are a fool if you lose your temper for a jeering word. Have done with this stuff: to your duty; and you, Quintal, you should not utter language calculated to fire a hot temper. Complete your tasks, and then, if you feel inclined, cut each each other's throats by all means. Go on, Quintal."

"With all my heart," answered Quintal, "but—"

"Say no more; you have said enough already," interrupted Belitre, "lead on; if the girl should be missed, we shall have the whole village up in arms and on our track before we get a mile further.

Quintal obeyed: bearing Violet as lightly as if she were a child, and as tenderly as his rough nature would permit, he led the way to the spring which Belitre had mentioned, followed by his three companions. They had not quitted the spot two minutes, and were scarce hidden from sight by the trunks of the trees, when the stranger who had related the history of Halbert Evesham to Wat Tyler, and unfolded the scheme of which Violet was to be the victim, appeared from beneath a clump of brushwood. He crawled cautiously from his hiding-place, and carefully noted the path they had taken.

"Fiends!" he muttered, bitterly, "would they had cut each other's throats, and anticipated the doom that awaits them! The All-Powerful strengthen my heart and arm for the enterprise! They shall yet feel that if revenge slumbers it never dies. Fear not, sweet maiden, harm shall not come to thee while I have life and power to act."

As he uttered these words, he stealthily followed the track the "robbers" had pursued; crawling, winding, and gliding from brushwood to thicket, from covert to stem, as if he were a phantom haunting their footsteps. He accomplished this peculiar manner of progress with a speed which was almost incredible, considering the singular style in which it was executed. He continued it with the utmost perseverance until he reached the spot by the side of the spring where stood the men, doing their best to restore Violet to consciousness. He crept into a thicket within a dozen yards of them, and then stretched himself flat to the ground. With lynx-like eyes he watched their every motion, and swallowed up eagerly every word they uttered, but remained motionless as death.

"It is very strange," exclaimed Growl, "she does not revive; she must be dead."

"Not she," "returned Quintal; "her face and hands are cold, but her body is warm, and there is a faint beating about the heart. She just breathes, that's all."

"She is wondrously beautiful," ejaculated Belitre. "I wonder if the angels in Heaven are as handsome as she is."

"I don't know," replied Quintal, "and what's more, I don't think that either you or I will ever have the opportunity of seeing."

"I am afraid it isn't likely," laughed Belitre. "But I don't think they can be; so I will satisfy myself by thinking that if I can't see one in Heaven, I have seen one on earth."

"I wonder how Mat Snake feels by this time," remarked Growl, fancying it bore upon the question.

"As hot as you will feel when you are served the same," sneered Quintal.

"It is very extraordinary," hastily uttered Belitre, to prevent a second outbreak following the sneer of Quintal, "what became of his body. I suppose some wolf pounced on him as he fell, and dragged him to his lair."

"That's not it," said the fourth devil," named Luc; "it's not the habit of the creature to do that. No, I guess what it is. The devil was so glad to get him that he wouldn't wait the usual time, but carried him off at once."

This speech was greeted with a loud laugh from all; and, when it had subsided, Belitre said,—

"Has the body not been found yet?"

"No,' replied Luc, "we searched well last night and all this morning, but there was no trace of him."

"It is very odd!" ejaculated Belitre.

"So Grif thought," responded Luc," but said very little, nor gave any orders respecting it. He thought as I do, I know; and when you come to reflect coolly, it is is no joke to be walked off with, in that unceremonious manner, before the breath is out of your carcase"

"Pshaw!" cried Belitre, with a laugh, "if our worthy patron, the high and mighty monarch of all sin, must have us, why he might as well take us the moment we are dead as let us lay and rot i' the earth for I don't know how many years."

"Hist! the girl revives," exclaimed Quintal, as Violet gave a deep-drawn sigh; the men crowded round her and observed it was as Quintal had said; she moved a little uneasily from side to side, and then raised her hand to her forehaid, muttering a few indistinct words, and gradually opening her eyes, she looked wildly round, then glancing hurriedly at the grim, ill-looking visages of the men who surrounded her, she gazed rapidly and fearfully at each in turn, stil apparently unconscious of where she was, or by whom encircled; at lenhth, as returning consciousness gave them more fully to her sight and sense, something of the truth burst upon her mind, and uttering a loud scream, she again relapsed into a state of insensibility.

"She's off again, by St. Paul," cried Quintal; "that comes of thrusting all your infernally ugly mazzards in the girl's face; if you had have kept aloof, this would not have happened; if we go on in this way we shall not reach Tonbridge to-night."

"Sprinkle the water hard in her face, bathe her temples and behind her ears well; my life on't she will soon revive, suggested Belitre.

Quintal did as directed, and soon had the satisfaction of observing that animation was once more returning in the gentle frame of Violet.

"Keep back, all of you, this time," observed Quintal, waving them off with his hand. "Give her a chance of not being frightened to death."

"Then take care she does not see that griffin's phiz of your's," chuckled Growl, delighted at the opportunity of saying something spiteful to Quintal, "or else there is no hope for her."

"Where am I?" murmured Violet, almost inaudibly, looking round with fear and apprehension, raising herself from Quintal's arms; but no sooner did she catch sight of her supporter, than, shuddering violently, she sunk on her knees, burying her face in her hands.

"Don't be afraid, damsel," exclaimed Quintal quickly, fearful of another relapse, and using the softest voice he could assume, which, albeit the effort, was very gruff, "nobody means to hurt you; we shall take every care of you—that's our orders; so look up, and don't care for anybody; for, as long as I am with you, the very devil incarnate shan't lay any unfriendly paw on you—so laugh and look merry."

The injunction of Quintal's to "laugh and look merry," for one in Violet's situation, was a matter not very easy of accomplishment; and with whatever intent it might have been expressed, it failed in producing a compliance, but it had the effect of making her raise her head and look upon the speaker at the same time; her glance took in the forms of Growl, Belitre, and Luc; her countenance betokened the greatest horror, and clasping her hands convulsively, she said, in a voice nearly hysterical with emotion,

"Who, and what are ye? why have you brought me hither? Have mercy, have mercy! Restore me to my father; I shall die if you do not—indeed, indeed, I am almost terrified to death. Spare me! you cannot mean to do me wrong—I have never harmed you, or any one; do no ill to me, who never wronged or injured you. I implore you, spare me!"

"Tush, girl," cried Quintal, "don't be frightened; we are not going to wrong or harm you—you're going to be made a lady of, I look upon it, so cheer up; not a hair of your head shall suffer harm. We only intend you good.

"Then restore me to my father," urgently exclaimed Violet. "He will die if he loses me, and I shall die too, if I am torn from him. Have mercy upon me, as you hope for mercy hereafter. Take me back! I beseech you take me back."

"It isn't in our orders," said the obdurate Quintal, not the least affected by the earnest appeal of the terrified girl; "and, as we must do only what is in our orders, you must on at once with us!"

"Oh, no, no, no!" cried Violet, almost shrieking with affright, "let me go. I will find my way to the village—let me go, and I will pray Heaven to bless you for the deed:" As she spoke, she sprung to her feet, and darted past Quintal, without waiting for a reply, but acting upon the impulse which directed her to endeavour to escape from some impending fate, teeming with indistinct horror; Belitre caught her in his arms as she was passing, and held her firmly.

"Not so fast, damsel," he cried; "'tis useless to attempt to escape, or to beg us to suffer you to do so; if we were to consent, our own lives would pay the forfeit of our weakness; and as far as mine is concerned, it is a sum which I do not consider myself rich enough to afford just yet. No harm is intended you, so remain quiet, and you will be treated gently; but if you persist in being refractory, I will not answer, but you will find us something ruder than we are now."

Just as he completed his speech they were startled by the hasty approach of footsteeps, and presently one of their comrades appeared, panting for breath, while the large drops of perspiration rolled from his brow.

"How now, Grégoire?" exclaimed Quintal, "what means your flushed brow and spent breath?"

"Why," uttered he, as well as his breath would permit him, "it means that the girl has been missed from the village; that it is known some of the band have carried her off, and half the villagers are up in arms. They are headed by a youth who knows the wood well, and has already laid his followers on your track. Grif has got a party of the band drawn out to meet them, and sent me, full speed, to overtake you, and bid you change your route. Wind through the most intricate parts, where you are least likely to be followed, and waste not a moment in completing your task. Away! at once with you; I must back to Grif. I did not expect to find you so near at hand, and it will be perhaps as well if I do not tell him where I overtook you. Adieu! you to your work, and I to mine."

Grégoire waved his hand, and dashed back the same way he came. Violet, who had drank in every word he uttered with the greatest avidity, fancied she heard the hum of the villagers' shouts, as they advanced in pursuit of her, and, thinking they might hear her shrieks, uttered such a shrill, piercing scream for help, that the wood echoed it, as it rung through the branches and leaves, nearly as loud as it was given: the men were themselves startled by it; but the next instant Belitre detached a small mantle from his back, twisted it quickly round her head and shoulder, so as to drown her cries, and lifting her from the ground, in spite of her struggles, bore her swiftly away, his companions attending him, as the shouts of the approaching villagers rose high in the air.

When they were hidden from sight, the stranger rose from his lair where he had lain immoveable, and ejaculated,

"Wat has done well, but fate has not let him do as well as I could have wished. By this time Grif and his band have encountered the villagers, and as it is not his policy to quarrel with them, he will do his best to appease and throw them off their scent: it is unfortunate, but we must trust to heaven. I have no time to stay to shew them which path these wretches have now taken; but I must see what I can do single handed; they shall not succeed in their villany, if I

perish in the attempt; once more, wolves, I am on your track!"

So saying, pursuing the same mode of progress as that already described, he kept close on the heels of the men who bore Violet away; and as they wound here and there, and took their way through the most intricate alleys or broadest glades, now in an open space, then entangled in briar and brushwood, stealing through coverts or tall gorse, still was the stranger at their heels.

CHAPTER V.

"In mortal battle, doubling blow on blow,
Like lightning flam'd their falchions to and fro,
And shot a dreadful gleam: so strong they strook,
There seem'd less force required to fell an oak:
He gazed with wonder on their equal might,
Look'd eager on."

DRYDEN.

"The balls of his broad eyes rolled in his head,
And glar'd betwixt a yellow and a red:
He look'd a lion with a gloomy stare,
And o'er his eyebrows hung his matted hair."

IBID.

"Fearfully the yell arose
Of his followers and his foes;
These in joy, in fury those;
Then again in conflict mixing,
Clashing swords, and spears transfixing,
Interchanged the blow and thrust,
Hurling warriors in the dust."

BYRON.

THE stranger had acquainted Wat with what had transpired between Martin du Bois and Grif, and found in him one who would join heart and soul to prevent their diabolical scheme from succeeding. It was too late, at the time this disclosure was made to him, to warn Violet from keeping the appointment, and likewise it was not politic; there was little doubt that if Martin failed through Violets breaking the appointment, he would devise some other scheme which they might not have such a good opportunity of thwarting; therefore they resolved to get Martin in their power before he met Violet, and to trust to the "devils" waiting for his arrival long enough for Wat to bring up a body of villagers to rescue the maiden from their clutches; their wishes were nearly all crowned with success, and would have been entirely, if Wat had succeeded in raising the villagers with the speed he wished; but so many of them were engaged in their various pursuits, at such distance from each other, that two hours had elapsed ere he had congregated a sufficient number to attack the band of devils with any hope of success. While he went to the village, the stranger sought the spot where Violet awaited the approach of Martin. The skill with which he managed his movements prevented his being seen by either of the villains who were laying wait to seize her, and he remained an invisible friend, to do the best a single arm could against four, if they proceeded in any way to offer violence to the gentle maiden. As they did not, he remained concealed, and with the same intention followed now their footsteps as they rapidly made for their destination.

Wat Tyler no sooner made known in Brenchley that Violet Evesham was in danger—had been carried off by a portion of Grif's band—than, with all the heartiness of purpose that can be imagined, each villager as he heard of it prepared to do something for her rescue. Young and old were ready to join. Those who were scarce old enough to bear a weapon, and those who had borne them long enough to know how to use them well, seized the first thing that was at hand, which might serve the purpose, and prepared to follow wherever Wat led them. As soon as he collected what he deemed a sufficient number, he made for the place from which Violet had been carried. It was soon gained; and Wat, who was first, found upon the ground Violet's coif, which Quintal had thrown down when he took it from her head, and the brawl between him and Growl had made him forget; he held it up, and waving his sword, he cried in a voice which trembled with excitement,

"Behold, friends, here is a symbol that some wrong has been done to Violet; it is her head gear—I know it well. Death without redemption to him who has harmed her!"

"Death, death without mercy!" cried the villagers, with burning eyes and fierce voices.

"Let this be our battle flag, our standard; and our war cry be 'Violet Evesham.' Let every one here remember, as he strikes, that he may be avenging some wrong done to her whom we all so dearly love, of whom these villains have despoiled us; and let that thought nerve his arm as it will mine, that when he strikes he may strike sure. Come on, brothers, we will rescue our sister or perish. Follow me; they have made for Tonbridge. On, for the rescue of Violet! Follow me!"

The villagers gave a loud shout as Wat delivered this short exordium; his whole frame dilated as he spoke, while his eyes gleamed with almost unearthly brilliancy; they rushed after his fleet steps, determined to carry out all that he bade them do, so that it tended to rescue their beloved friend or avenge her wrongs.

As the "devils," upon seizing Violet, had taken the most direct route to Tonbridge, it was an easy matter for Wat and the villagers to keep on their track, because the way was known to all. On they went, as swiftly as the nature of the ground would enable them, each eager to be foremost in saving Violet from dishonour or death. Such impediments as their rugged path interposed were quickly surmounted, and as they were congratulating themselves upon the prospect of soon overtaking the robbers they arrived at a turn in their path which showed them a party of Grif's band, equal in number to themselves, well armed, drawn up ready to oppose their further progress. At their head stood Grif, leaning upon a two-handed sword of amazing length. He did not change his position when the villagers appeared, but surveyed them with cool indifference as they came rushing madly on, the instant they caught sight of him and his band, shouting words of vengeance.

Wat Tyler, as he had been hitherto, was first. Waving a sword of nearly equal size to Grif's, he dashed up to him, regardless of a line of bristling pikes presented to prevent his advance. As he approached within a few feet of the Bloody Hand, Grif changed his position for one more defensive, but not less cool, and exclaimed in a loud voice, of a stern and startling nature, which had the effect of arresting Wat's progress,—

"What seek you? Why do you thus approach us with arms and menaces? We have done no hurt to you; we have levied no contributions on you; we have respected your homes and property; we do not wish to injure you—then why seek you a conflict in which you must all suffer and gain no end?"

"Where is Violet Evesham?" exclaimed Wat.
"Give us back Violet," cried the villagers.
"Violet Evesham!" repeated Grif in affected

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.]

astonishment, "I know nought of the maiden, save that she is the pride of the village."

"Thou liest, fiend," shouted Wat Tyler. "Thou hast plotted with a scoundrel named Martin Du Bois, whom, I thank the Holy Virgin and my right arm, ere this has perished, to carry her off that she might be the victim of a vile purpose I shudder to think upon. He has met his fate, and unless you restore her at once, spotless and unharmed as when thy base crew seized her, I will hew thee peacemeal, or perish in the attempt. Speak quickly. No equivocation. I know thy men have borne her away; I know thou wert cognisant—that it was by thy command they did it; and, so help me the Holy Mother of God when most I need her aid, if thou dost not yield her up, I will not leave thee until thou or I be cut to pieces."

"You speak in riddles, boy," returned Grif, contemptuously. "I know nought of what thou hast said. I know no Martin Du Bois. If any of my men have carried the girl off, it is without my knowledge, and in defiance of my orders respecting all inmates of your village, for I have strictly prohibited the band doing aught against your peace. I do not doubt, by your appearance, that the maiden is missing—that she has been foully carried off, but not by me or with my

[Engraved by J. Wall.

assent. If they be members of my band who have done this wrong, they shall hang from the branches of the tree nearest the village. If they had a hundred

lives they should be sacrificed to your vengeance. Nay, to show you that I speak the truth, my band shall join your's in the pursuit. They are fleet of foot—know every turn and intricacy of the wood. They shall lead thee where thou art most likely to overtake the fugitives; and no matter whether they be comrades or not, they shall deliver the ravishers into your hands. Can I say more?"

"Yes!" cried Wat, energetically. "Thou canst tell the truth; for every sentence thou hast uttered is a lie—a gross, monstrous lie. Do not believe a word he has spoken," he said, turning to the villagers. "Mix not with his vile crew; they will mislead ye—put you on the wrong track. I tell you it is by his means Violet has been stolen from us. He is to receive a thousand merks for his assistance. I know it from one who overheard the bargain."

"Ha!" cried Grif, starting, and glancing fiercely from Wat at each member of his band, as though he would single out the one who had betrayed him; but he saw nothing in their astonished faces to aid the desired discovery. His features worked with a rage he could ill dissemble, although he strove hard to do so. Turning again to Wat, he said, in a harsh, bitter accent,—

"Rash, hot-headed fool! were it not for thy youth, not even my good will to these simple villagers should stay me from crushing thee as I would a worm. Know that the man lives not who could say he called me liar twice!"

"Thou art still a liar!" interrupted Wat, passion almost getting the better of his judgment. "Twice have I already called thee so; thrice do I so; and would a hundred times, if calling thee so could make thee a greater liar than thou art! And as a liar, thou art a coward—a sneaking, pitiful, mean-spirited, cowardly poltroon; for none but such an one would plot and do harm to one of God's fairest created beings!"

It would be impossible to depict the ungovernable fury that convul-ively worked Grif's features as Wat's words, uttered as fast as he could pour them forth, met his ears. He ground his teeth until he foamed at the mouth—his huge frame trembled with passion—and, in a voice so choked by rage that the words were scarcely audible, he exclaimed, pointing to Wat's sword,—

"Canst thou use that weapon thou hold'st so braggingly in thy paws?"

"Ay, and to good purpose, too," eagerly replied Wat.

"I will try thee, thou barking whelp! I will scourge thee with a rod of iron, thou chattering cub! Stand back, devils! and, whate'er ensues, move not an inch until I command ye, on pain of death! And you, villagers, if ye have made this foul-tongued boy your leader, trust him to meet me, nor budge a foot to save him if he fall, if ye would not meet the fate my good inclining towards ye keeps ye from."

"Ay, good friends," exclaimed Wat, with a sudden coolness, contrasting singularly with his previous impetuous bearing—a smile even illumined his features—"do as he has requested ye; interpose not a finger between this lying villain and I. If he slays me, leave not the purpose for which ye have assembled; but, as I have devoted my life for Violet's sake, do your utmost to restore her safely to the home she made beautiful—to the village of which she was the good angel. You will do this for my sake as well as for her's, for I know there are some hearts here who have good will and wish towards me. To those who have more than the rest I bequeath the prosecution of our object; and if they would have my dying blessing, should it be my lot to fall, they will never quit it—"

"Have done with thy preaching," interrupted Grif, preparing to wield his sword, "unless thou wouldst have me think thee a more frightened braggart than I do now."

"Come on!" cried Wat, preparing for the encounter. "Thy patience shall be no further taxed."

"Hold!" cried a voice from among the villagers; and instantly the speaker advanced to Wat's side. He was a youth about two years Wat's senior; not so tall, for Wat was already nearly six feet, but strongly-built and well-proportioned. "Hold!" he cried. "This is not fair, Wat. Why should you alone run risk for your life? We are all bent on the same purpose—all feel our loss equally—and, therefore, have a right to expose our lives equally."

"Canst thou not understand, thou shallow-pated meddler," roared Grif, enraged at the interruption, "that I am about to avenge a personal insult? What we fight for has no reference to what you have lost. Back, fool! and save thy interference for a more fitting period."

"I'll not back!" cried the youth. "Wat, he is no match for thee; he is bigger, more used to his weapons, than thou art. If I am not so tall, I am stouter and am older than you; let me stand up to him—I can tackle him, I think, better than you. We are true friends, Wat, and have never yet quarrelled. Let me have my way in this; and if he cuts me down, which I don't think he can do, you will be best able to lead on the pursuit. And if personal insult is all you require, Grif of the Bloody Hand, I call thee liar five hundred times over, and scores of scoundrels, cowards, and poltroons, to boot; if they are not enough, I spit at thee, dog!" He accompanied the word with the act. Maddened with rage, Grif sprung at him to cut him down, but Wat leaped before him, and interposed his weapon. He kept Grif at bay, while he shouted to his friend,—

"Keep back, Michael—keep back! This quarrel is mine only. If you are a true friend, who loves me well, and would not now do a hurt to my feelings, do not interfere. I fear his size or strength not a jot. If you are my friend, keep back!"

"You shall have your way, Wat," answered Michael; "but I will stay by your side, and if he slaughters you, by all that is holy! I swear he shall the next minute try my strength and dexterity to the death!"

Grif, in judging Wat by his years, made a miscalculation of his strength and ability to use his sword. He, like others, imagined Wat to be some four or five years older than he really was, because he was tall, and his limbs were more set than those of youths of his age usually are. Grif, knowing his own strength and capabilities, laughed to scorn within himself the determination of Wat to oppose him, and resolved to cleave him to the chine, in order to terrify the villagers, and deter them from proceeding further in search of Violet. He attacked Wat fiercely and vigorously, with the intent of making short work of it; but when the heat of his fury had somewhat subsided, he discovered he had not made the progress he expected, added to which, every stroke Wat gave came with such force that they were more like the blows of an iron bar than those of a sword. He began, therefore, to exercise greater caution. Wat was a more expert swordsman than he had calculated upon, and he frequently found he had as much to do to defend as attack. Their blows rained on each other's weapon as thick as hail; the wood echoed with the din of their clashing swords. They fought desperately, neither giving the slightest chance, but each watching

eagerly to take advantage of the first that offered. It soon become evident, to the joy of the villagers, and to the astonishment of the band, who thought that no one could oppose Grif's sword successfully for any length of time, that the combatants, so far as the knowledge of their weapons were concerned, were equally matched. As this grew each minute more apparent, Grif's coolness vanished, and rage took its place. He fought more wildly, but more fiercely than ever. He knew the eyes of his band were upon him, watching his every movement with the most intense eagerness, and the slightest failure on his part in such an encounter as this was calculated to lessen his power over them; he, therefore, finding that it was useless to trust to his swordmanship for success, Wat being as expert as himself, resolved to carry the victory by a *coup-de-main*, and, summoning all his strength, he delivered such a tremendous blow that Wat's sword was whirled from his grasp to some distance; but ere Grif could recover his weapon from the swing which the violence of his blow had caused, Wat sprung upon him, and before he could anticipate his purpose, tore his sword from his grip, hurled it after his own, and then, with prodigious strength, seized Grif by the throat. Grif tried to do the same to Wat, but the latter, having the first hold, rendered Grif's efforts comparatively ineffectual; however, his hold of Wat was anything but light, and his strength anything but small, while he had no mean knowledge of wrestling; yet even in this Wat coped successfully with him. They swayed to and fro, twisted round and round, each exerting every art to fling the other, but as yet in vain. As they each occasionally appeared to have the advantage, each party of spectators displayed a movement expressive of their feelings. Wat never took his hands from Grif's throat; he held on with the tenacity of a bull-dog; every effort, every exertion which Grif made to dislodge them were futile. He kept continually compressing them until Grif's eyes began to distend to an almost unnatural size, while his mouth opened and shut in vain efforts to articulate some words he apparently wished to utter. His grasp of Wat relaxed,—his face grew frightfully red,—froth issued from his mouth. Wat made fresh exertions as this became apparent, and increased the compression of his fingers on his antagonist's throat, until it was evident he was suffering all the horrors of strangulation. The band began to murmur; oaths broke forth, and indications became apparent that they intended to break Grif's command, and rescue him, unbidden, from the clutches of his youthful opposer. Wat heard their exclamations, and expected what would ensue. Suddenly Michael's voice burst upon his ear, crying loudly,—

"Keep off, villains, keep off! your orders were not to move an inch. I will cut down the first who attempts it."

"We'll not see our leader murdered and stand coolly by," uttered one of the devils fiercely, and burst from his place. Wat heard Michael's sword clashing in opposition to the devil's pike, and gathering all his strength into one prodigious effort, he withdrew his hold from Grif's throat, and, like lightning, shifted it to his waist, at the same time lifting him from his feet, he pitched him upon his head with such violence that Grif lay upon the ground stunned, motionless, and apparently dead.

The band of "devils" uttered a fierce roar upon seeing their leader thrown; and the villagers raised a tremendous shout of triumph. Michael, who had cut his opponent's pike in half, left him, ran up to Wat, and ere he could offer any opposition, seized and dragged him into the midst of the villagers.

"Take care of him till he takes breath," he cried energetically, "he has done his share of the work. Some one get him his sword, and the rest follow me. Hurrah for Violet Evesham! Cut a path through the black dogs! Hurrah! down with them! Fight for Violet, Wat Tyler, and victory."

Brandishing his sword, he dashed at the devils with such enthusiasm that ere the villagers had time to understand the words he had shouted, he was making desperate use of his sword. The first who opposed him he had little trouble with; the pike with which the devil was armed offered but little resistance to the "swashing blow" of Michael's two-handed sword, for he was similarly armed to Wat,—he cut it in half as he had the preceding, and inflicted a terrific slash in the fellow's shoulder, as he dropped with the force of the blow. Michael exclaimed with energy, "Was that anything like Wat? Come on, lads, there's another black muzzled villain down! Clear the path, scoundrels! a clear road, ye dogs! give it them, friends, hotter than they can swallow it; we will have Violet yet. Hurrah!"

Michael fought as well as talked, and fought well, too. His words animated the villagers, and they pressed on, attacking the band with a vigour the latter could not have deemed them to possess. They were ill armed, though each man bore something in the shape of a weapon; but what they lacked in arms they made up in spirit. Wat, who had regained his sword, had waited but a moment to regain his breath, and wipe the perspiration from his brow, and now appeared by the side of Michael, fighting with the desperation of one who was resolutely determined to gain his object, or sacrifice his life in the effort. He seemed endowed with new strength, and wielded his weapon as though it had been a reed. His stern, unflinching demeanour, his recent success with their terrible leader, and his able employment of his sword, made the devils hesitate to stand before him, and even to think him something supernatural; men who at at another time would have laughed and treated him with a contemptuous scorn, as did Grif, now shrunk before him as he advanced, and waiting but to cross his weapon twice or thrice, left him to a comrade, and sought a new foe. By this conduct Wat was succeeding in making a path, his companions followed close to his footsteps, fighting manfully; advancing, though slowly—still they were advancing. Michael kept close by Wat's side, echoing his words and emulating his actions; occasionally hearing Wat exclaim,—

"'Twas well done, Michael!"

"I am doing as you do, Wat," was the reply.

"Give it them!—make them feel your sword has two sharp edges."

"They are complaining of that already."

"So much the better!—let them have cause for their complaints."

"They shall!" exclaimed Michael, with a bitter laugh.

"Follow up close, friends!" shouted Wat; "they give way! they give ground! Violet Evesham, or death!" and as he uttered his words, he plied his sword with fearful energy; Michael following his example with the utmost enthusiasm, shouting as he shouted, fighting as he fought. Several men were strewed upon the ground desperately wounded, but as yet the band of devils had been the greatest sufferers. What would ultimately have been the result, had the contest continued, it is impossible to say; but the band, as Wat had observed, gave ground, and the villagers pressed them hard on ascertaining it. In consequence, the fight grew more desperate,

until a strange voice called loudly for a parley. It came from a member of the band, who proved to be Nick Grim. As soon as his repeated calls produced a cessation of hostilities, and he could see that he was listened to, he exclaimed,—

"It is useless for us to continue fighting without anything to fight for; as Grif told you, we don't seek to harm you, or interfere with you—"

"Where is Violet Evesham, rascal?" roared Michael, interrupting him.

"Grif spoke the truth," cried Nick; "we have not seen her, nor do we know what has become of her."

"It is a wicked lie, dog!" thundered Wat. "By Heaven you shall tell us where she is, or we will not leave the wood while one of you remain alive in it!"

"You are wrong,—you have been misled," returned Nick. "Be this the proof:—thou and thy party shall have free access to the wood, without molestation; and if you find her in the possession of any of the band, cut them to pieces. You had Grif's permission to do it, and in his name I repeat it."

"What guarantee have we that you mean as you speak?" exclaimed Wat.

"What can we give,—what do you require?" asked Grim.

"That you surrender your weapons to us while we are in the wood; and if we find that you have not been concerned in carrying off Violet, I pledge my word every one shall be returned to you."

Nick Grim consulted his comrades, but from their murmurs it was plain they disliked the proposal. After a little while, he said—

"Name some other terms—my companions refuse to be left defenceless."

"None other will suffice. If they will not surrender them freely we must have them by force. We will not place ourselves in a situation to be attacked by you in any spot which may be disadvantageous to us," said Wat, sternly.

"We do not wish to attack you at any time—I will take any oath to that effect; but my comrades will not surrender their only means of defence. However, we will meet your proposition half way—your friends are not all armed; we will supply arms to such as need them, but retain the remainder."

"Agreed," said Wat; "but in accepting your offer, remember that if you attempt any villany, you will purchase your success at a very dear price."

"You need not be afraid," said Grim; "we mean you no treachery. Draw off your men, and I will mine, and then we will fulfil the conditions of the treaty."

Wat complied with his wish, and stated the number of weapons he required; Grim collected them from his companions, and put them into the possession of Wat, who immediately divided them among his friends. A passage was opened for them by the "devils," who at once gathered up their wounded comrades, their insensible chief, and slowly retired into the recesses of the wood, in the opposite direction to that the villagers were about to take. Two only of Wat's party were wounded, and they not deeply; they were sent, under the guidance of two others, to the village, while the remainder with a loud shout, full of hope, and high in spirits at their recent success, departed in pursuit of their much-loved, their gentle, lost friend, Violet Evesham.

CHAPTER VI.

"Forlorn his state, and dark the place,
Was never wight in such a case
Through all the land before."

PARNELL.

"I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye;—earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb."

BYRON.

"Avaunt! and quit my sight. Let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!
* * * * * *
* * Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery—hence!"

MACBETH.

WHEN Halbert Evesham arrived at Lamberhurst, he discovered that his presence was not only unrequested but unexpected; he made the visit in obedience to the urgent solicitations of a strange messenger whom he had met the previous day, who had stated that matters of the most pressing necessity and importance demanded his immediate presence. The nature of these matters the man refused to disclose, observing, that when he had reached the dwelling of his friend, from whom he had professed to have come, he would be made acquainted with everything. Obtaining his consent to visit Lamberhurst on the morrow, the man disappeared; and agreeably to his promise he quitted Brenchley, as already stated, to find upon his arrival at his friend's abode, that he had been made the dupe of the stranger, for what purpose he could not divine; although he racked his brain to trace the motive which could have induced him to send him on a bootless errand so far from home; yet he little dreamt it was an artifice employed by Martin du Bois to get him out of the way, while he executed his diabolical scheme against the honour and happiness of his beloved foster child.

Notwithstanding the arguments which Halbert's friend employed to convince him it was a mere trick, a piece of village humour, a practical joke, he failed to satisfy his mind that it had so simple an object; he knew that the villagers held him in too much respect to put such an insult—if but a trick—upon him. But, whatever his speculations, he could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion, and therefore for the present, dismissed it from his mind, resolving upon his arrival at Brenchley to sift the matter well. Although his friend had nothing to communicate beyond a hearty welcome, he contended himself with that, and sat himself down to enjoy a few hours of his company; they passed quietly and pleasantly, for he knew not what was transpiring in the wood, nor for a moment dreamed that while he sat engaged in smiling chat, his sweet child was in dire distress and danger.

The sun was three hours' journey from the meridian, when Halbert bade his friend farewell, and crossing the borders of the counties, entered the wood on his way home. He walked gently on, for he knew not the need for haste; the beauty of the day, and the green things around charmed him. He was an ardent lover of nature, and found delight in gazing upon her wondrous productions, and now, when the sweet

spring was merging into young summer, and every flower, leaf, and bud, even the very birds themselves, were young and fair, and revelling in all the unalloyed joy of freshness, because of their youthfulness, and instinct with beauty, as all things are at that happy time, he found new gratification in surveying the growing, budding, sweet-odoured forest things, as they slightly waved to and fro in the cool gentle wind, which was slowly gliding through and among them, every leaf bending and trembling as if it felt the same delight as its pleasant, grateful kiss created in Halbert, when he felt it play around his brow, and temper refreshingly the air which the sun had not long since made so warm. In the air there was the singing of birds, and the hum of insects, and the rustle of the ungrown leaves, as the soft wind playfully lifted them without moving the taper-winding boughs, or the ivy-twined moss-o'ergrown trunks; and yet these gentle sounds seemed to make silence more apparent—to make Halbert feel, as he passed along, that he was the only moving thing there. Now through dells where trees, young and old, entwined their boughs so thickly, they made the path gloomy with deep shade; and then through the broad glades, where the bright sunshine lay in long lines upon the even turf, sporting with flowers of all hues, and making the delighted and never-aching eyes wonder at their unapproachable loveliness.

Every step Halbert took displayed some fresh beauty, some new object replete with sweetness; and, as he stayed to view them, or lingered with a deeply gratified gaze upon them, as he moved tardily homewards, his progress was necessarily slow, and when he had strolled some miles in this fashion, somewhat wearied, he threw himself beneath a tree to rest himself. In the midst of a deep rumination into which he had insensibly fallen, he fancied he heard some faint moans rise on the quiet air. At first he thought it was the wind beginning to rise, and was sighing through the boughs of some thickly-tree'd copse near. He looked up to the sky to note the change, but all was clear, calm, and blue there, and then he turned his eyes to earth again, and listened for a repetition of the sound. It came again, but something fainter than before, and it struck him as having a touch of human voice in its sound. He bent his ear attentively to listen, and endeavoured to ascertain from what quarter the moans proceeded; it was not long ere he was satisfied. He quickly arose, grasped his staff firmly, and advanced in the direction of the spot from whence he imagined them to arise; he wound among the trees, which grew thicker as he proceeded, until at length he entered a dark, dreary dell, quite removed from the path usually pursued, and as much from the beauty; the trees were thick and grisly in appearance, the ground was damp and marshy, while tall weeds, rank and poisonous, grew profusely out of the wet earth, twining up the unhealthy, slimy trunks of the various trees. He hesitated as he entered, the place looked so wild and solitary, but the moans continuing, and evidently being but a short distance from him, determined him to go on; he muttered a prayer and proceeded. The dell grew still more desolate, dreary, and dark as he advanced, and upon arriving at the loneliest spot he had ever beheld, his eye encountered, bound to a tree, precisely as Wat Tyler had left him, the form of Martin du Bois.

Halbert started with surprise and wonder to see him situated thus, but did not recognise in his form the person of his late frequent visitor. He glanced round hastily to see if the perpetrators of the deed were present, but the dreary silence of the place told him that himself and the captive were the only two in that lone spot.

"Who are you? and how came you thus?" he demanded, approaching Martin. A faint moan was the only answer he received. Without repeating his question, he drew his sword and severed the thong which confined Martin to the tree, then released his arms, and his head from the cloth which enveloped it. The haggard visage of Martin, almost blue from suffocation, met his astonished gaze as he supported him in his arms. "Holy Virgin!" he exclaimed hastily, "Martin du Bois! who has committed this monstrous outrage? speak!"

But Martin had not the power to articulate a word; his dim eyes rolled vacantly around, his face changed to an ashy paleness, his lips moved, he slightly raised his hand, his fingers working convulsively, and then his head dropping suddenly on Halbert's shoulder, he fainted.

"I fear me this villanous treatment has killed him," murmured Halbert; "he is stone-cold, breathes not, moves not; yet it may only be a swoon from excessive exhaustion. I will try and recover the poor youth. Who could have committed this cruel barbarity? It is some of Grif's murderous crew, I do not doubt." As he concluded he lifted Martin's body across his shoulder, and carried him from that wretched damp place, nor rested until he had placed him by the side of a wind of the same stream, where, at nearly the same time, his child was being restored to life by Quintal.

Little deemed Halbert that he was striving to save the life of one who had sought to rob him of the dearest, greatest tie that bound him to life; little did he imagine that he who now lay stretched before him, motionless and apparently dead, had plotted, and nearly succeeded, through his base artifices, in destroying his happiness for ever, and of blasting, with a frightful, terrible blight, the bright hopes and youthful aspirings of his darling innocent child. He thought only of restoring to animation one of whom he knew little, but in that little, no wrong; of one who had brought him intelligence which had almost made him live the past over again. But though it had created bitter thoughts, even much agony, yet he, the bearer only, was not to blame that he should be the messenger of matters which created unhappy thoughts; and so he removed the straggling hair from his clammy brow, and bathed it with the cool water of the clear stream. Life was not extinct, and as he discovered this he redoubled his exertions; he poured the refreshing liquid upon his temples, washed his parched lips, and chafed his hands, until returning warmth gave tokens of approaching animation. In a little while Martin opened his eyes and stared wildly round him; he closed them again for a short time, remained with them so, then again he stared around him, looking steadfastly on each object, as if to assure himself that they were not the phantoms of a vision. His eye at length caught the face of Halbert bending over him; a slight convulsive shudder ran through his frame, and in a voice rendered hollow by his late shrieks and groans, he exclaimed—

"Is this reality?"

"It is, Martin du Bois," returned Halbert in a quiet, kind voice; "look up; this is I, Halbert Evesham, you are safe now; fear nothing, my good youth. Cheer thee, no harm shall reach thee while I am with thee."

"Was it all a dream—a hideous, frightful dream of suffocation, of death, and the fierce tortures of hell?" muttered Martin, unheeding the words of Halbert.

"If you speak of your situation, it was no dream, but a fearful reality," exclaimed Halbert.

"Ha! who art thou? speak!" cried Martin, springing up and seizing Halbert by the throat; glaring upon him with blood-shot eyes, and speaking in hoarse tones. "I'll sell my life dearly—no more suffocation, no more wolves tearing, whirling, and roaring madly round me—no more laughs and yells, and bitter sneers from fiends and demons. Thou shalt hew me limb from limb ere thou shalt again make me feel the torments of the damned. I am still strong. I have strength to defend myself to the last! I will not be dragged to that horrible doom! Come on, I defy thee; I fear thee not—I—I—" His hands lost their hold of Halbert's neck, at best but a feeble grasp, and clasping them together, he fell upon his knees, burst into tears, and in a low, supplicating voice, ejaculated "Have pity! have mercy!"

Halbert saw that his mind was wandering, and, softening still more the tones of his ever mild voice, spoke soothing words to him, bidding him fear not. Martin suffered himself passively to be almost lifted from the ground; but as he stood up his knees shook as though they would not support him. He trembled in every joint; he cast his eyes swiftly from side to side, apparently meditating an escape. Halbert noticed it, and rightly guessed the cause. He laid his hand upon him, and felt him shudder at the touch. He was at a loss how to proceed. It was evident that Martin knew him not—that he still imagined himself to be in the power of him who had placed him in the terrible situation from which Halbert had rescued him; and, until this idea was dispelled, and he became conscious of his real position, Halbert had little hope of being enabled to lead him, as he intended, to his dwelling, and then, by quiet and gentle treatment, recover him from the severe shock his mind and body had received. The only method which presented itself to Halbert was to induce him to sit down and converse calmly, purposing so to lead the conversation that Martin would ultimately regain his aberrant intellect.

Let it not be imagined that the state to which Martin was reduced is exaggerated or improbable. He was naturally brave, as indeed most men are; but, like all men, in some situations, was cowardly. Opposed to a danger of which he could calculate the amount, of which he knew the extent, he was as courageous as the bravest, though perhaps not so cool. But he was eminently superstitious—the age in which he lived was so—and he was, perhaps, more so than the age. The priests grasped everything in the shape of worldly wealth on which they could lay their hands—the greater portion of the land was in their possession; but, not content, they went on seizing and grasping, taking from all—mostly those who could ill afford it, but who could not *resist*—and gave but little in return. The oppressed peasantry saw daily their hard and bitterly-earned property, small as it was, diminish for the payment of taxes, the greater proportion being those levied for the support of the Church. They were consoled by their priests telling them that it was "for the love of God," and the welfare of the soul hereafter. They preached a morality they did not practise, and pictured a punishment hereafter for its infringement calculated to terrify the strongest mind—if he believed. They taught the deluded labourers, for their own aggrandisement, how proper it was to be religious; but how good and beautiful it was to expend their all, to sacrifice their small gains, live in misery and poverty, in want and hunger, nay, almost famine, for the benefit of the priesthood—of the holy Mother Church—and their own souls. There was not an article in the code of morality which had not for its base and apex, "Support the Church!" The terrors and torments which they invented for any dereliction had the effect of keeping those whom they sought every opportunity to grind to powder in the dust; indeed, they were so very liberal in dealing out damnation for every trivial act, and so careful of keeping anything like reason from interfering, that as a man grew older his prospect of heaven diminished in proportion; and many were the men who, from being the victims of this doctrine, became greater villains than they would otherwise have been had they been taught differently, because, having committed several mortal sins, as well as being wicked enough to fancy they gave too much to the Church, they were given freely to understand they would be damned without redemption. They believed this, and in consequence stopped at no species of crime, however fearful.

Martin du Bois was the heir to an enormous property. His confessor, who was his tutor also, had instilled into his mind a vast quantity of superstition, for two reasons. First, he hoped by working on it, if it yielded anything like a good crop, to obtain large grants to his monastery; and, secondly, Martin was a youth whose passions were always stronger than his virtuous inclinings; and, as he exhibited this at an early period, the priest thought it advisable to frighten him into good behaviour, on ascertaining that he would not be coaxed into it by being shown the beauty of morality. Thus, as a boy, being unable to master his inclinations, he always imagined he had his Satanic Majesty at his shoulder, waiting upon him with all the devotion of an attached servant, whose close attentions grow frequently offensive and troublesome.

As a boy, he would fight, storm, and wrestle with any one whom he was satisfied was mortal, but he would have nothing to do with darkness. He would tear down a dark passage, if alone, at the very top of his speed, feeling, like Sinbad of immortal memory, as if he had an old devil seated on his shoulders, grasping him with a tenacity nothing would loosen—an incubus which would not leave him until he was once more in the light. This weakness his confessor having produced, took every care to foster. It grew with his growth, strengthened with his strength, and, at the period at which he is introduced to the reader, it had possession of him as strong, if not more strongly, than when he was a thoughtless, weak-minded boy.

When Wat bound him to the tree, and left him, his agony of mind was intense. He well knew that the wood abounded with wolves, whose nature was always to attack the defenceless: he momentarily expected to feel one spring upon him, and tear him to pieces, without the slightest power of resistance. The suspense was awful. He had never been so near death before, and—he had time to think upon it. It presented itself to him in every variety of shape, each more fearful than its predecessor. He had no distinct idea of any mode, but his imaginings led him to believe he should perish in some manner as hideous as it was unknown. He could tell by the dread silence, and by the dampness of the ground, that he was in a lone, desolate spot, with no human being near him to relieve him from his dreadful situation—no escape—nothing but death before him, and that of the most terrible description. His imagination did not stop at his death, but went beyond it, and caused him to speculate upon what tortures he should meet with when he had quitted the earth. Every nerve quivered with fear; and, even while this horror was upon him, he fancied he heard the low growl of a wolf. His

hair bristled, his teeth chattered—he broke out in a cold sweat—his hour had come for a painful, agonised death here, and torture hereafter—and he actually screamed with fright! He was completely unmanned, unnerved, without the slightest power of exerting the least portion of courage to meet his fate like a man.

The growl he heard was but the wind sighing through the trees, which being thicker in that spot, made the moan rather loud; he did not receive the attack as he expected, and believed the cause arose from the shriek he gave. He suddenly remembered having been told wolves were cowed at the sound of the human voice; it was his only chance, and he employed it vigorously. As he kept shouting, the hope arose that some of Grif's band might hear and rescue him; it lent new strength to his lungs; he sent forth shriek after shriek in rapid succession, while his imagination conjured up a large party of wolves running round him, waiting only until his voice failed him to tear him in pieces.

No help came.

The fear that he should soon by this constant exertion lose the power of articulation, and so the ability to prolong his life, heated his imagination beyond the power of his brain to bear it and still remain sane. As the wind kept sighing and groaning through the hollow places around, he believed it to be the laughter of fiends who had come to assist the wolves in torturing him before he quitted the world, and in the agony of his horror he screamed as if his very heart-strings would crack; his mind began to fail him, and he grew delirious, but never ceased yelling frantically until his voice grew husky with exertion. It was then that Halbert heard him, and proceeded to release him; nature was exhausted, and he fainted; he could not, on being restored to life, recover aught beyond the sense of his recent dreadful situation, and acted with the conviction that he was released only to be returned to the same place, and for the same purpose.

When Halbert persuaded him to be seated, and spoke kindly and soothingly to him, striving to console and cheer him,he believed it to be only an artifice further to ensnare him. This idea gradually vanished, and he began to discover a difference in the voice to that of his antagonist; that it was calm and gentle, and that of an old man; and ultimately, that the old man was Halbert Evesham. When this first broke upon his mind, he started, and looked wildly but scrutinisingly at him, to assure himself that he was not deceived. When satisfied that it was Halbert upon whom he looked, he conjectured that he knew the reason of his being confined to the tree and left to his fate, and that he would execrate him accordingly; but as he found all his words were kind, a hope grew upon him that he was unaware of his infamous scheme. By degrees one recollection followed another. He remembered that Halbert had been through his means induced to go to Lamberhurst—was probably on his way home without having heard of his villany, had fallen in with him, and rescued him. He determined, as this flashed upon him, to ascertain if the surmise was correct, and looking up in Halbert's face, he said with a smile, but in tones which were hoarse and low—

"Good Halbert, I recognise you now. It is to you, then, I owe my release from that most dreadful situation. In what terms can I thank you? In what way endeavour to repay the heavy debt of gratitude I must for ever owe to you?"

"I am overjoyed to see that you have so far recovered as to know me," replied Halbert; "to me you owe nothing, to the Almighty everything. Your position was, indeed, frightful; I shudder to think what it might have been, if I had not opportunely arrived to rescue you."

"How did you discover me?" inquired Martin.

"I was decoyed by false intelligence to pay a visit to Lamberhurst," returned Halbert. "On my return I lay down upon the turf to rest myself. I heard moans arise from some place near me; I sought the spot from whence they proceeded, and found you blindfolded and bound to a tree. I released you, and you swooned. I bore you from thence unto this stream, and with its aid recovered you."

"For which I am eternally your debtor," ejaculated Martin, delighted to find from Halbert's answer that he was unacquainted with the attempt on Violet.

"Who perpetrated this vile outrage upon you?" asked Halbert. "Was it any of the band of marauders infesting these woods, who, having plundered, left thee to perish in that awful manner?"

"No," returned Martin; "the object was not plunder, but revenge. The perpetrator was one who attacked me when in a defenceless state, and possessing not only weapons but great personal strength, overpowered me, bound me, and left me to be the prey of wolves or snakes, and other horrible things."

"Then you know who did the deed," said Halbert.

"I know the ruffian's person well, but not his name," replied Martin; "but trust me, I will repay his act tenfold."

"What could have been his motive for proceeding to such fearful extremities?" inquired Halbert.

"Merely my success in a love affair," answered Martin, affecting indifference and uttering a lie, knowing too well he dared not tell the truth.

"Did you use no undue means to obtain your success?" interrogated Halbert.

"None," returned Martin; "save such as Nature placed in my person, and in the maiden's taste. Why dost thou ask with such earnestness?"

"Because I know the dreadful crushing agony of having one whom I loved, God knows how dearly, how devotedly, torn from me by base means," cried Halbert, with sudden and startling energy. "I know what it is to suffer the bitterness of such a loss; the utter destruction of all hopes, of happiness on earth for ever! and if thou hast done like to this, thy punishment was poor to what thou didst merit."

Martin looked uneasily at him as he uttered this speech, and then turned away before the keen, glittering glance with which Halbert regarded him. In speaking of his loss, did he mean Violet? Surely not; yet the coincidence was strange; however, he hastened to reply, for fear Halbert should attribute his hesitation to guilt.

"If there is blame, it rests not with me," he said, continuing his lying excuse. "It was a mere matter of choice on the girl's part, and she decided in my favour; for that he sought his revenge upon me."

But his words were addressed to an unheeding ear. Halbert had fallen into a deep reverie almost ere Martin uttered a word in reply. The latter, as he concluded, looked with surprise at the change. He saw the features of the old man,—if he could be called old, who was only aged in suffering—work convulsively, his hands clasp each other closely, and tears disengaging themselves from his eyelids roll slowly down his cheek, while a sigh burst from him as if his heart broke in the effort. After waiting a short time, and finding that Halbert still continued abstracted, Martin, who was uneasy respecting Violet, and anxious to know what had become of her, recalled him from his reverie by observing—

"What means this sadness, Halbert? What has happened that you should be thus abstracted, and

tears should chase each other down your cheeks? Have you experienced the loss you speak of recently?"

"No, no," replied Halbert; "years—years which have seemed like ages—minutes like years—have passed since that bitter hour. How have I wished I had died then—'twas a vain and selfish wish—and had I, never should I have known the charm of my beloved child Violet's sweet society."

"She is only your foster-child," said Martin.

"It is true, so far as I know," replied Halbert; "but never was child adored by parent as I love her. As a child, her sweet prattle and affectionate acts tended much to alleviate the anguish of mind I then endured; but as she grew older, and increased, if possible, in loveliness, in affection, in tenderness, in all things beautiful, she wound herself so round my heart that she became the only world I wished to live for. I was—am—willing to sacrifice the memory of all I have suffered, of what caused it, in the contemplation and the furtherance of her present and future happiness."

"I do not know the means by which she was entrusted to thy care, nor do I seek to know," exclaimed Martin, when Halbert had ceased speaking; "but suppose her claimed by those who placed her in thy keeping, what then?"

"When I am assured that she is claimed by those who have the right to claim her, then will I render her up; but not separate from her."

"What if she were taken from thee by violence?" suggested Martin.

"I would call back my youthful spirit, my strength and activity, once again. I would rather a hundredfold be as thou wert placed when I released thee, than be him who should do her or me that monstrous wrong. I am quiet by nature; in no way disposed to punish to the death those who do me ill, but were such an evil to fall on me, let him who does it beware. I would never leave him while I had breath. His fate should be one to make the strongest mind shrink from, and one I would procure him whatever my own might be."

Martin was astonished at the energy with which Halbert delivered his sentiments, and judged from it that he spoke not unadvisedly. He knew that he had incurred already the fate to which Halbert alluded, and he felt also that if he persevered and succeeded in getting Violet into his power, he should always have something to fear: he should have the phantom of a fearful death at some unexpected time always before him; as it was, if Grif's men, through his absence, had not carried off Violet, and the youth who had bound him denounced him to Halbert as the one who had purposed it though he failed, he was debarred all chance of obtaining her but by open violence, and that he feared. If the devils had carried her off, this same youth would, no doubt, still be by to tell who had paid them to do so, and nothing would then keep Halbert from hunting him down but his death—ay, death! In every way he was an obstacle in his path; for even now he was determined Violet should be his. He feared him, and because he feared, hated him. Perfect security could be purchased by his death; the idea each moment strengthened—they were alone; no one near to interrupt or see him commit the deed; he resolved to murder him. He had no weapon, for Wat Tyler had taken his from him; but Halbert had, and it was easy to obtain it from one so unsuspecting as him. Although, from the weakness which his confinement to the tree, and subsequent swoon, had produced, he was unable to cope with him in a struggle, yet he could seek an opportunity of burying it in his heart, and then, what could prevent Violet from being his, or who would there be to call him to account after he had her in his power? In the midst of these speculations, he was aroused by Halbert saying—

"I waited to see if thou had'st any more questions to ask, but find by thy silence thou hast not. I will not trouble thee now by asking why thou hast put them to me, because they can be answered at thy leisure; so, if thou art strong enough to walk, we will on to my dwelling, and there thou shalt remain until thou art well. Every attention shall be paid thee; my dear Violet shall wait upon thee, and I deem it almost worth being ill to have so sweet a nurse. Come, let us on; we have some distance to walk, and thy weakness will lengthen the time we ought to take."

He rose up, gathered up his cloak and staff, assisted Martin to rise, offered his arm to him, but it was declined.

"No," he said. "I thank thee for the offer, but I will not so trouble thee. I confess I am weak, and if thou wilt lend me thy sheathed sword I will use it as a support."

"Nay, Martin," returned Halbert, "I am stronger than thou thinkest; fear not to lean on me, I can well bear thee."

"No," persisted Martin. "It is useless to waste words, nothing shall induce me. I will not borrow thy staff, for thou thyself dost use it; thy sword will do well—let me have it."

"No, no!" exclaimed Halbert. "If thou wilt not take my arm, have my staff, you will find it more useful than the sword."

"I think not," uttered Martin, with a ghastly smile. "Let me have my way. I prefer the sword—it will answer my purpose best."

"As thou wilt," ejaculated Halbert, divesting himself of his sword, and handing it to Martin. "There, take it, and know you lean on a weapon that was never used for a dishonest purpose; one for whose use its owner never had to blush."

Martin received it, and bent his head low to conceal the workings of his features.

Halbert led the way to Brenchley, followed by Martin, who waited only a favourable situation to put in practice his execrable design. Ever and anon his intended victim turned his head to see what progress he was making; and several times when he had the sword half drawn, Halbert looked round to cheer him on; the sword was instantly returned to its scabbard, and used as a support: this occurred frequently. At last he began to fancy that Halbert suspected him, for ever as he was about to put his design in practice did he turn his head and stare at him, as if he penetrated his purpose, and was resolved not to give him a chance of executing it. It was but the suspicion that waited on guilt. Halbert had no idea that such villany was intended him; but he turned his head to see that Martin was not overtaxing his strength, and to be at his side the moment he required more support than the sword yielded him. Little did the good man imagine such black ingratitude was to repay his philanthropy, and never turned him round to Martin but to cheer him, and tell him how well they were getting on, and how soon they should be at Brenchley.

Now that Martin had resolved to slay him, he heeded not, and cared not what Halbert said; his mind was all absorbed with the idea of murdering his preserver, and bearing away Violet. Perhaps the "devils" had succeeded in carrying her off, and were

awaiting his presence at Tonbridge. If such were the case—and it was easy to be ascertained—he had but to give one blow, one sure blow, and his work was complete, his design perfectly successful. A host of reasons thronged to support his intention, to prove its necessity and its good. Each step he advanced strengthened his resolve, and kept away all feelings of remorse at the shameful act he was about to perpetrate.

They entered a narrow copse; the thickly overhanging boughs of the entwined trees made the place unnaturally dark. It was of some length,

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

and grew darker as they neared the middle. Martin looked around him, it was the very place for a foul deed; there was plenty of tall palmy gorse to cover the body when it fell, and there was none to see him commit the crime—yes, there was ONE—he felt there *was* ONE, and the thought made his flesh creep on his bones, as it went scorching through his brain. He should be alone, too, with the body; the warm blood dabbling his hands, perhaps with tenacity of stain he

could never remove; and who could say whether there would not be unearthly things with glaring eyes staring glowingly on him, but frightfully silent, watching every movement he made with a dreadful absence of sound. He shuddered as he thought of these things, and peered into the darkest places almost with the expectation of having his fears realised. There was nothing, however, to support his superstitious imaginings, and with the thoughts of Violet, his murderous intentions returned. They had reached the darkest spot—now was the very time; if he delayed a moment he should suffer the best opportunity to escape him. He drew the sword hastily from the scabbard; it flashed in the darkness; he saw it glitter; he feared Halbert would turn and see him; he sprung upon him; thrust the sword through the mantle of his victim, just as he was turning to speak to him. He felt the hilt strike against his body, then he drew it swiftly out, and on a strange impulse, flung it far from him. Halbert staggered a moment, but did not fall; a ray of light bursting through an opening in the trees lighted upon his face; it looked bright and clear, the only thing visible in the darkness. Martin saw the face turn to him, it was ashy pale, the light lending a white to that which was already a ghastly whiteness; the eyes picked him out although he stood in the dark, and they were in a bright light—God, such a light! They glared on him an icy glare, that curdled and froze every drop of blood in his veins. They were like flames, drawing their existence from snow. Cold, and blue, and glassy, and yet live flames—they fixed on him and moved not—they looked into his eyes, nor swerved the thousandth part of an inch. Why would not his own eyelids close and shut them out? Or why did not the body fall, and bear those dreadful eyes with it? He saw the lips move—the lips which looked like lines of blood on the white face; and he heard a voice, hollow and cold, exclain—

"Murderer! sleeping or waking, henceforth, I will be ever present to thee?"

The face approached his. He had no power to take his eyes off, nor to move; he was rooted to the spot. He saw white hands come towards him—he could not lift a nerve to stay them—he cowered down—he felt the fingers, cold to icyness, twine about his neck. The ghastly face was within a foot of his own. Making a tremendous exertion, he stretched out his hand to push the body from him. Pah! warm blood covered it, the cold fingers compressed round his throat. He sickened—grew faint—his sight became dim—his brain reeled, and he fell senseless beneath the body of his victim.

CHAPTER VII.

"Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear: for several virtues
Have I liked several women—never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to the foil. But you—O you!—"

SHAKSPERE.

"One bound he made, and gained the sand,—
Already at his feet had sunk
The foremost of the prying band,
A gasping head, a quivering trunk;
Another falls"——

BYRON.

Arn. 'Tis a scratch.
Lend me thy scarf—he shall not 'scape me thus.
Ces. Where is it?
Arn. In the shoulder, not the sword arm—
And that's enough. I am thirsty—would I had
A helm of water!
Ces. That's a liquid now
In requisition, but by no means easiest
To come at.
Arn. And my thirst increases; but
I'll find a way to quench it."

BYRON.

"See the swift courser strains; his shining hoofs
Securely beat the solid ground.
* * * *
Again he flies, and with redoubled speed."

SOMERVILLE.

UPON this eventful evening, as the sun was fast sinking, and the day drawing near to a close, a horseman took his way through the Weald, in the direction of Tonbridge. He seemed in no hurry to proceed, for his steed, which was high-blooded, merely pranced, instead of either trotting or galloping. He was quite youthful, and seemed in high spirits: he patted his courser's neck, and chatted gaily to him as he curvetted and caracoled.

"So ho, my bonny Tricksy," he said quite loudly; "thou'rt frisking like a lady's page; ay, even as I did when I waited on Dame Philippa. Heigho, that was a rare time, and yet was I not contented, although there were such pretty faces and bright eyes in scores; ah! it was a rare time, kissing and drinking. Marry! a page is sorely tempted—sorely tempted; how stood I all through it, I know not. It was well I went to the wars; I half suspect I should else, ere this, have been a woman myself—what think'st thou Tricksy, should I have made a tolerable lady? Steady, so ho! hast thou a mind to fling me for the presumption of that thought? Oh, by'r Lady, I fear me thou dost right to kick up thy heels; I am too fond of fighting ever to have been a lady, and yet how I love the sex! Ah, how I personify them in one sweet form—in one lovely maiden, and how I adore her! Beshrew me, I love the land that produced her. I love aught that is connected with her, and worship her; if before this I had hated womankind, I would love them now for her dear sake. It is strange that I, who have so often looked on fair faces—aye, fair even to loveliness—and have received their smiles and pleasant glances, should, when absent, have remembered them only with a feeling approaching indifference; and now, here is a maiden who sought not my eyes as others have

smiled not upon me, unless there was need for't; utterred no words having other meaning than that which they expressed; and yet her eyes are sweeter to me than all others; her smiles more desirable, and the tones of her voice more delicious:—you grow tiresome, Tricksy, and interrupt my thoughts; I'll make thee stand still, and do penance for breaking in upon the dearest recollections ever man was blest with. Wo ho! still, Tricksy, still! Now, fond as I am of fighting for the love of glory, yet would I rather do battle for that little angel than for all the glory that was ever obtained, and ever will be. Natheless I received my spurs on a battle-field, and as yet cannot boast of having met with the least success with the maiden. It is true I think she loves me a little; and I love her, oh!—"

He stopped, for he was at a loss for a simile to tell even himself how much he loved her. Suddenly his horse shied, and nearly threw him. He reined him up quickly, and hastily looking to see the cause, he saw Violet's unknown friend, the stranger, who had followed the "devils" when they bore her away.

"How now!" he cried sternly, as soon as his eyes lighted upon him; "art thou one of the vagabond marauders who prowl in this wood for the sake of robbery and murder? Thou hast come suddenly upon me—what is thy purpose? Thou'rt no phantom, though thou art ugly enough to be one—but I do not believe steadfastly in their existence, although Father Paul tells me there are such things—and if you are not a phantom, you are too grim-looking to be aught but a robber. Speak, man, what art thou? If you want plunder, I have only my sword worth having; and I much fear, if you attempt to take that, it will cut thy fingers."

"I *do* want thy sword," said the stranger.

"Here it is!" said the young horseman, drawing it from the sheath; "come and take it—if thou canst."

"I need it for a purpose far nobler than thou dost imagine," returned the stranger. "I need its use, and by thee that use must be made."

"You are considerate," dryly returned the youth. "I do not happen to be in want of employment just at present, therefore must beg to decline the cut-throat purpose for which you would engage me!"

"If you are what you seem, you will do my bidding heart and hand," exclaimed the stranger: "and if not, thou'rt a worthless poltroon, beneath contempt."

"What!" cried the youth angrily, grasping his sword, and urging his horse close to the spot where stood the stranger; who, however, moved not; "What mean you, fellow?" he added, haughtily.

"Listen!" replied the stranger. I overheard you say you would rather fight for the maiden you loved, than for all the glory that was or ever will be obtained."

"Well, and if I did say so, what then?"

"Would you, if she were in danger?"

"Would I? thou speakest strangely; said I not, I would? and if she *were*, Saint Mary! would I not?"

"For her sake you would do much?"

"Anything which tarnished not my honour; and she would never need aught to do that."

"Then in her name I call upon you to aid me. Near to this spot, a maiden as lovely in person and mind, and loved as much by all who know her as thine can be, lies in jeopardy. She has been carried off by four of the band who inhabit this wood, at the instance of one who has already paid dearly for his villany."

"Why was she carried off?" inquired the youth.

"To be the victim of a scoundrel! but bitterly for him is the scheme frustrated. She is the idol, and deservedly so, of the village from which she has been torn; if she returns not—if harm or wrong comes to her, there will be sad hearts in Brenchley."

"Where?" thundered the youth, with a shout which startled the horse and made the stranger recoil for a moment.

"In Brenchley," he repeated, on the question being impetuously demanded.

"Who—who is the maiden?"—quick!—what is her name? speak!" cried the youth, with intense eagerness.

"Violet Evesham!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Holy Mary! is it her? Where is she? where are the villains? Lead me to the spot at once—delay not a moment!" he ejaculated energetically.

"Will you attempt her rescue?" said the stranger.

"Will I?" echoed the youth, in a tone of contempt. "Why do you ask that question?"

"Because I wish you to attempt it alone—have you the courage single-handed to attack four?"

"Ay! in such a cause, four hundred instead of four."

"It is right well; I will lead you to the spot where she sits hopeless and almost broken-hearted. I have watched over her that no harm should happen to her, and think not, youth, I shrink from attempting her rescue. Had there been no aid near I would have tried it as thou art about to do, alone, rather than she should have been borne away."

"Lead me to her!" impatiently exclaimed the youth, his fingers grasping his sword-hilt vigorously as he spoke.

"You must dismount," said the stranger.

"For what purpose?" asked the youth, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Because the villains must not hear you approach," was the reply. "You must lead your horse over the longest grass, so that you may be upon them ere they know you are near. If they should be aware of your coming, not all your courage and address will be able to save her."

"Are you one of the band?" enquired the youth.

"No! I thank the Holy Mother, I am no such villain," replied the stranger. "I would not even have them see me. I owe them a deep debt for injuries they have done me, and if my existence be known unto them, I shall, perhaps, lose my chance of revenge. I have waited long for it; I have worked hard for it; and if my life be spared, I will have it. But this is nought to thee; yet when thou may'st think of me hereafter, I would not have thee class me with these villains. I am fulfilling a stern and solemn duty; one to which I have devoted all my energies—nay, my life, and have sworn to accomplish. When thou knowest that duty is to exterminate this murderous band—that I will do it *alone*—thou wilt acquit me of fearing to rescue single handed the gentle Violet. Now, no more of myself. But of thy task; if thou dost succeed in rescuing her, make for Brenchley with all speed; the villagers are up in arms in her behalf, and will be half-way to meet thee, unless they have been beaten back by Gril's band, who were drawn up to oppose them. But if my judgment of the youth who leads them is correct, such an event has not occurred; such an one as he would cut a path for himself and followers if the opposers were thrice their number."

"Ha! who is this youth?" inquired the young horseman, with an air of interest.

"A young villager, a playmate of Violet's when a child, and if I understand rightly, a lover now—ay, and a devoted one too, if enthusiasm in her cause be a criterion of his affection for her."

"Indeed! I should like to see him," exclaimed the

youth, while something like a haughty smile played round his mouth.

"He will repay the sight, for he is a noble, high-spirited fellow. He has already half revenged the wrong done to the maiden, by punishing with a fearful death the villain using these foul means to gain her, and now he fearlessly heads the villagers in hot pursuit for her rescue. He must be a stout fellow, and the band a strong one, that will stay him."

"I love to hear of a brave fellow," cried the youth with flashing eyes. "I must find him out. I owe him something for his gallantry: by what name shall I recognise him?"

"He is called Walter."

"Walter!" echoed the youth astonishedly.

"He is the son of a tyler, in Brenchley; he is known among his friends by the name of Wat Tyler."

"And he loves Violet Evesham, you say."

"I believe so; I judge from his energy in her behalf."

"It is a strange coincidence," uttered the youth. "No matter, trust me, I will not forget Wat Tyler. And now, my sombre friend, if thou hast any pity dwelling beneath that dark garb of thine, lead me at once to the place of the sweet Violet's captivity."

"Dismount."

"It is done," said the youth, leaping lightly from his horse.

"Follow me as silently as you can, and see that you let not your horse betray your approach."

"Never fear him; he will tread as soft as a maid on tip-toe to meet a secret lover. Dost hear, Tricksy? If thou makest a noise thou wilt ruin matters, so be silent and step noiselessly." He accompanied his words by motions which the horse appeared to understand, for he remained on the instant immoveable. His youthful master then put his left arm through the bridle, and grasping his sword firmly in his right hand for instant use, motioned to the stranger to lead on. He did so with such care and stealthiness that not a sound rose from his footsteps, while the youth, observing his caution, imitated it with nearly equal success, and the steed, who seemed impressed with the necessity for silence, trod with care, nor made any slip or noise calculated to produce a discovery of his proximity. They had not traversed far when the stranger motioned for him to stop; a sign he instantly obeyed. The stranger then crawled into a thicket and disappeared, leaving the youth wondering at his strange facility of twining noiselessly among the stumps of brushwood. He remained a minute, which seemed ten, without any communication from his singular conductor. Suddenly he heard the loud and angry hum of voices, as if in dispute, a short distance from him. He grew impatient; he longed to be among them for Violet's sake, and clutched his sword with nervous excitement. Presently the voices ceased, and all became quiet. A moment elapsed, and then the stranger appeared, winding like a snake from the thicket in which he had disappeared. He rose from the ground and whispered hurriedly—

"Now is the time; the villains have grown impatient at the prolonged absence of their employer, and three have gone to see if they can discover aught of him approaching. One only remains with her."

"I heard a sound as if of dispute; what meant it?" asked the youth, scrutinizingly, for he was not yet satisfied the stranger had told him all truth.

"One bloodhound would not trust another—one villain, called Growl, refused to leave her with another named Quintal; each challenged the other with intending her violence; a third, who has kept peace among them hitherto, persuaded them both to go with him, while they left a fourth to guard her; and they have gone, like a pair of snarling curs, growling and snapping at each other. Follow me round; you cannot take your steed through here, and you must have him by your side."

The youth, who, though he had questioned, listened to the reply with much impatience, readily followed where the other led, and soon came to a small open spot, near which a stream ran windingly. There, indeed, he beheld the terrified, weeping maiden, kneeling at the feet of a ruffian, who, leaning upon a spear, looked coolly upon her. The youth heard her exclaim, in a tone that made his chest and heart burn as it fell on his ear—

"Is there no hope?"

"None with us," replied the fellow, in a gruff voice, "there is none for us hereafter, and none with us here."

"Be merciful, I implore thee; restore me to my home—to my father. There is some pity in thine eyes, I see. Oh think, if thou hadst a child like me, one whom thou loved most tenderly, how thy brain would turn—how thy heart would break, if she were to be torn from thee as I have been from one who adores me. You cannot be so merciless as to deny me; you will not. Those terrible men are gone. I pray thee have pity. I am very young: I have never known sorrow till now. I am unused to harsh words and cruel acts. They will kill me. Let me escape! I can return—fly through the wood alone. Will you not let me free?"

"No! it isn't likely; my own life would be the penalty."

"Oh, no; thou can'st say I fled like a frightened deer; that the wind was not fleeter; that I outstripped thee. They will not harm thee. Thou hast courage and strength to defend thyself, and I have not—I have not. I am defenceless—none near to help me. Oh, let me fly! Thou dost relent; I see thou dost. Heaven bless thee for thy mercy!"

The weeping girl rose from her supplicating position; but ere she could move a step to fly, the ruffian Luc burst out into a brutal laugh and seized her by the wrist, throwing down his spear as he did so.

"I relent, if you like to call it so, my pretty wench, but it is only from a sudden fancy. There is no one near, and therefore none to gainsay me. So I will have a few kisses from those sweet little red lips of thine."

He seized her round the waist—she screamed frantically. At that moment a hand seized Luc by the throat with the grip of a giant, and a voice thundered in his ear—

"Hellhound, unhand her!"

Luc did so; for the crushing agony of the grip on his throat was unendurable, and he turned to rid himself of its strangling power, while the voice continued—

"Hadst thou shown the slightest grain of pity—a particle of mercy—I would have spared thee. No mercy didst thou show—none shalt thou have. Die, remorseless, heartless fiend! Die, thou wretch without a soul!" A sword gleamed in the air, and Luc, with his skull clove to the brain, fell, with a heavy groan, upon the bank of the stream, his red blood mixing and tainting its pure waters.

Violet's brain was dizzy with fright. Her deliverance was the work of a moment. She turned to her preserver; she could scarce see through her falling tears, but the instant his form met her gaze she rushed into his arms, and, uttering a short hysterical cry, exclaimed—

"Walter!"

"My own sweet Violet!" he ejaculated, his voice rich with emotion, and pressed her to his heart.

"To your steed—to your steed! lose not an instant," cried the stranger from the thicket, where he lay invisible; "that carrion's comrades are returning. Quick, quick!"

"Oh, Walter, do not leave me; you will not leave me!" exclaimed the terrified Violet, clinging to him.

"Fear not, dear Violet; you are safe with me. They shall cut me to pieces ere they tear you from me. Here, Tricksy; quick, boy." The horse was at his side in an instant. He vaulted lightly into the saddle, and lifting up Violet, placed her before him. "Now, Tricksy," he said, patting his neck, "if ever you were disposed to use wind and limb well in my service, now is the time. Here come the black dogs."

"Save me, save me!" cried Violet, throwing her arm round his neck, and burying her face in his shoulder, as Quintal, Belitre, and Growl came running up, alarmed at the shrill scream Violet had given. They were astounded at the altered state of affairs, and proceeded at once to attack the youth—Quintal with his spear, Belitre with his sword, while Growl endeavoured to seize the bridle, which Tricksy would on no account permit. He threw out his fore-paws with such a sudden plunge that Growl was hurled like lightning to the ground, stunned.

"Cut him down," roared Quintal, making a thrust at him with his spear.

"Bloodhound!" cried the youth, parrying the thrust with a tremendous cut of his sword, which severed the pike as if it had been a blade of grass. "I have hewn down hundreds such dogs as thee, even thus;" and his second blow, given almost as soon as Quintal felt the first, slashed fearfully across his face. The ruffian dropped. Spurring his steed, he dashed over Belitre—rode him down—flinging him to the ground with the shock, and, cheering on the noble animal, plunged into the wood, leaving the wounded and the dead far behind them.

As they flew along with a speed which seemed to defy all pursuit, the youth essayed to cheer Violet, and used words and sentiments which showed him to have mixed with a circle much above the common sphere.

"My dearest Violet, how you tremble!" he exclaimed, as he felt her slight frame quiver while leaning on him. "Fear not; no harm shall come to thee while I am with thee."

"I am not afraid now, Walter," she replied. "I feel quite safe with thee, as if nothing on earth could harm me now thou art by my side; but I cannot help trembling at the recollection of the frightful horrors I have endured since I was carried away."

"Did the ruffians drag thee from thy dwelling, Violet?"

"No; oh no! they would not dare. No, I can see through the wicked attempt now. My father had a visitor lately, a young person who sought him for some purpose with which I am unacquainted. I only know my dear father always seemed unhappy when he had been there, but he was always treated with kindness and respect. This strange visitor continually followed me, and made me unhappy too, for he told me he loved me, and tried to persuade me to fly with him—"

"And you?" impatiently interrupted the youth.

"I refused every time as firmly as I could, but it had no effect; he still continued, exhorted, prayed, and once even wept; but now I believe not his tears were real, although then I did, for he seemed very miserable. At last, I begged him to leave us for ever, and forget me. He said he would if I would meet him on the borders of the wood to take a last farewell—"

"And you consented?" said the youth, again interrupting.

"Not till he told me that my father's life was in danger; that I alone could save him."

"Ah! I guess the rest," hastily exclaimed the youth. "You came to the wood to see him, and then these rascals carried you off. Well, this youth has been fighting manfully in your behalf, I am given to understand."

"He? impossible!" returned Violet. "From what I heard dropped by one of those dreadful men, I gathered that he planned it all, and they were waiting for him when you arrived. I am sure I heard them repeat his name."

"What name?" asked the youth.

"Why, his—Martin du Bois."

"Oh, oh!" muttered the youth, "I have been confounding persons all this time. Now I see the rascally plot. Martin du Bois! that is a name to remember. If the youth, the stranger mentioned, has not completed his work upon him, I will finish what he has begun, without leaving another the chance of coming after me."

"Oh, Walter!" said Violet gratefully, "How my father will love you for rescuing me. You, too, to arrive at such a time, when I had no friend near to help me, and how earnestly I prayed for it."

"Aye, but there was help near thee, sweet Violet," said the youth.

"Yes, thine, Walter. When I beheld thee at that fearful moment, it seemed as if Heaven had sent an angel of mercy to my aid!"

"That scoundrel, from whose clutches I saved thee, thought not so—I doubt not," smiled the youth. "But you had other friends—ay, and strange ones, too. Marry, it was a fellow who was habited exactly similar to those who bore thee away, who told me of thy situation, and said he had watched carefully that no harm came to thee. He told me also of another who has worked hard for thee, has punished this Martin du Bois, and at the head of a score of villagers is fighting his way to thy deliverance; he is named Wat Tyler."

"Dear, dear, Wat!" ejaculated Violet, directly his name was spoken.

"You speak fondly of him, Violet," hastily uttered the youth, a shade passing over his features.

"And think so too, Walter."

"You love him, perhaps?"

"Most dearly, indeed I do; and he loves me. Oh, Walter, if you knew him, you would love him too."

"I am not prepared to acknowledge that much. How comes it, Violet, that I never heard thee mention his name, and yet it is the same as mine?"

"It must have been some strange forgetting on my part, if I have not."

"You have known him long, have you not?"

"We were children together."

"Was he always as dear to thee as now?"

"Always, for he was ever kind to me. I have had neither brother nor sister, Walter—kith nor kin—save my father, and Wat always strove, by every exertion, to prevent my feeling their want. Who but Wat made all my toys, and they so much superior to all others of their kind? Who but he brought me the first flowers in spring, the choicest bird, and the best present it was in his power to make me? He was willing to do my bidding in all things—would smile when I seemed happy, and would be sad, though he tried to cheer me, when I was dull. When I fell into the village stream, after it was swollen by heavy rains, and having overflowed its banks, was rushing, boiling,

and raging with terrible rapidity, it was Wat who leaped in, and, at the hazard of his own life, saved me, when the stoutest men turned pale at thoughts of battling with its waves. And then did he not, though weak from exertion, stay by my side till I was restored to life? and, when the fright and exhaustion made me ill, and keep my bed for weeks, did not his face hang over me as I fell into a slumber, and smile on me when I awoke? Was not he the first to greet me in the morning, and the last to leave me at night—the kindest, most unwearied, patient nurse a sick child could have? His was the arm which supported me when I first quitted my home after that visitation, and led me into the sweet fresh air to a small bank on which he had planted and trained the prettiest flowers that grew. I saw the tears of joy rush into his eyes as I seated myself upon it, and he fell at my feet upon his knees, and raised his hands, and thanked God! I shall never forget it: it made me weep too. He never left me until the weakness had passed away, and I could, unassisted, run laughingly out among my merry companions — the merriest there! As we have grown older he has never changed. He is still the same fond, faithful, affectionate friend as ever—has the same wish to do me service—the same desire that no hurt or ill should approach me — the old readiness to bring me joy, or shield me from danger! Is he not now, as you have told me, fighting and risking his life for me? Should I not love him for all this, Walter? Does not all this untiring kindness deserve my love?"

"I would take shame unto myself, if I said nay," replied the youth, gravely; "he does deserve thy love, if mortal can deserve it; and—and—he has it; a full requital for all his services; but I would to Heaven that I had known it when first I saw thee!"

"Why do you say that, Walter?"

"Nay, ask not— it is no matter. I shall be glad to see thy—how the word chokes me—thy lover, Violet."

"Do not call him my lover, Walter—say brother; for we are as brother and sister; the dearest, united by relationship as well as by love, could not be dearer to each other as brother and sister. We have always called each other so, and thought of each other so."

"There's comfort in that, however," thought the youth; "yet I only deceive myself to think so; such devotion as his, and such appreciation of it as her's, tells me there is no hope for me. Bah! no sword ever wounded me so deep as that; well, I must bear it. This innocent girl deludes herself if she believes her love for this Wat Tyler is a sister's; and his is something more than a brother's, I'll be sworn. It would ill become me, a knight sworn to do honour and justice to maidens, to strive to gain her love from one who has so long laboured for it, and so deservedly earned it; and therefore, I will do my best to try to forget that which it would be a wrong to both to remember."

"Why do you keep silent, Walter, and look so grave?" asked Violet, noticing the reverie into which he had fallen.

"It was but a passing thought," he exclaimed, hurriedly, "a—nothing. I shall see thy *brother* soon; I would know if he is tall or short, stout or thin; in fact, since you have given me so glowing a description of his actions, I would learn something of his person."

"Your eyes will do him more justice than my tongue can. I can but tell thee he is tall and well-proportioned, and has a very handsome face—but his heart should be a king's."

"And yet she thinks only of him as a brother!" muttered Walter. "How oft I have flattered myself in my vain moments that I could conquer anything; but I am afraid there is something now in my heart which will be harder to fight with than the hardest fought field ever contested. No matter: hard as it is, I will do it; it shall never be said that Walter Manny ever did aught to bring a maiden's tears or wring a man's heart. Keep thy heart for him who has won it, sweet maiden; I confess it was my hope that it would be mine, but the will of fate be done." He turned to Violet, and spoke kindly in tone and manner—"I have little doubt," he said, "but he is all a maiden desires, and all that a man should be; I have only heard two speak of him, and both have praised him highly, and what I hear makes that praise just. Walter the soldier will be glad to know Walter the tyler, and I trust, when they are known to each other, they will be friends."

"Oh, I am sure of it, and I shall be so delighted. Thy steed gallops swiftly, Walter, but my wishes outstrip him."

"I do not doubt it, Violet; but Tricksy knows the value of the burden he bears, and therefore throws his feet with more caution and with less speed; he has done me many a good service, the noble beast."

"And will again, I hope."

"I hope so too. Hist, Violet!—heard you not the tramp of men?"

"No, no; 'twas but the wind sighing among the leaves."

"He has been in several battles, Violet, and borne himself right gallantly. Once, at Halidon-hill, when hard pressed by the foe, he carried me, in spite of every obstacle, through a body of men who had surrounded me and were about to cut me to pieces. Nobly he did it; he plunged and bit as if he knew my life depended on his exertions. What is the matter, Violet? why are you shrinking thus?"

"Oh, Walter, listen; I am sure I hear footsteps. You were right, the sound you heard was the tramp of men."

"I hear them plainly; I thought my ear was too practised in the beat of feet to be mistaken. Hark! Halt, Tricksy!" Here he reined up his steed, and stopped to listen more attentively, and then continued —"Ay, Violet, that is the heavy tread of many feet."

"Oh, let us fly, Walter; put thy horse to his utmost speed. Fly, Walter, fly!" urged Violet, in terrified accents.

"Fear nothing, dear Violet—it is but the villagers approaching," he said, soothingly.

"Pray heaven it may be!" earnestly exclaimed Violet; "but suppose it should be some of the band of that horrible monster, Grif?'

"By the Mass! I had forgotten that," said Walter, quickly. "I fear my head is wandering. If the black rascals should have beaten back the villagers—which they probably have done, inasmuch as they must or ought to be the better soldiers—these comers will prove to be the marauding ruffians. If their villanous eyes light on us, they may desire to commence a familiar acquaintance—an act I should feel marvellously inclined to resent, seeing I do not intend to submit to such a piece of impertinence; it will perhaps be therefore the wiser plan to reconnoitre. Now, Tricksy, gently, steadily, boy! here's an oak of no small circumference, and, thanks to its huge girth, it casts a tolerably broad and dark shadow, whose friendly aid we will employ; night is nearly on, the place pretty dark, and unless they have remarkably good eyes, they will not easily distinguish us. Softly, Tricksy! tread as if the ground was made of ladies' fingers. Gently, so!—here we are as well secreted as if we were shut up in a chest."

"Oh, Walter, they are advancing fast—they will discover us. Do you not fear to remain here?" uttered Violet, tremblingly.

"Fear to remain!" echoed Walter, throwing up his head a little haughtily, while an expression of scorn curled his lip; it passed away instantly, and he smiled as he said, in a low kind voice, "I had forgotten, sweet Violet, I had with me a treasure so precious as thou to preserve; I did not remember that thou, who hast lived in the loves of all around thee, had never been thrown until now into circumstances of an affrighting nature, and look with horror upon a situation which I, from much assorting with turbulent scenes, feel disposed to laugh at as a trifling dilemma. But I will remember that the shock of a sudden danger might kill thee,where it would warm my heart to action. I will, for thy dear sake, act as cautiously as though I were afraid; albeit, love, I fear nothing but a dishonourable deed or thy displeasure."

"Walter, they are here—they are those dreadful men—we are lost!" whispered Violet, clinging to him with terror.

"Ay, 'tis the rogues sure enough," muttered Walter. "Well, I'll thank them, if it is only for their obtaining me the charm of having so sweet a charge resting upon my breast, and looking up to me for protection. There's not a bad sprinkling of them, but with this dear girl as a sacred trust, I would cut my way through a squadron such cut-throats; by Heaven! were I alone, for sport I'd do it. But calmly, Walter; a stray bolt might slay this fair thing: no, I'll essay nothing rashly. Keep up thy spirits, Violet; thou hast for thy protection a bold heart, a stout arm, a sword unsullied by defeat or disgrace, one that never failed when its might was needed, and a right mettlesome steed, who would put to flight a hundred such dogs as these. Be not afraid, fear will only give thee pain; it does nothing for thy safety; in truth, it too often precipitates a danger from which coolness might extricate one. I have seen it; therefore still thy panting heart. Look your evil in the eyes, and you rob it of more than half its danger. Courage, ma belle Violet!" His voice, which in the foregoing speech had sunk into a whisper, now ceased altogether; for the devils were fast filling the dell in which they were stationed, and were advancing directly to the tree behind which they were sheltered. They were leading one man slowly; he was followed by one who appeared to be a prisoner; four more bore a senseless body, and the rest scattered themselves indiscriminately. When they reached the tree, the led man disengaged himself from his supporters, and seated himself at the foot. It was Grif of the Bloody Hand. The horse started as he threw himself heavily down, but a touch from Walter rendered him as motionless as a statue.

"I can go no further," said Grif, faintly, "my limbs fail me. I must rest here for a while."

"Are you wounded?" asked Nick Grim.

"No, not much; 'tis a mere skin-break, but I will revenge it as if it were a gash that would cost me a limb. May withering curses blight and blast me, if I do not hack the hound, this Wat Tyler, in a thousand shreds, and throw the rags of his carcase into the flames of the village, which I'll burn to the ground; not a stick of it shall be left to say where it has been. Death and hell! to think a stripling should thus defeat me, even when I had the victory in my grasp—just as I was about to cleave him in twain; bitterly will I repay him. Fiends! how my head opens and shuts, throbs and splits; my mouth is parched—let me have some water!"

"We have none," said Nick Grim.

"Then get some, fool!" he roared. "One of you take your helm to the nearest wind of the stream; go, and return at the top of your speed. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; my throat burns like a red hot brand."

"And mine also," exclaimed a voice which Violet at once recognised to be Martin du Bois. She instantly communicated her discovery to Walter.

"Aha!" thought he, when he heard it, "friend Wat did not finish his work, but I will, unless the devil specially interferes to save his own."

"Well, Martin du Bois," uttered Grif, in a voice frightfully hollow, "thou hast cut out a very pleasant pretty piece of work for me. This is your simple service! I have been nearly killed, and what never before occurred—defeated! mark that. I have lost several of my band, who have been beaten by a handful of villagers, with whom I wished to be on terms of peace, which desire thou hast destroyed—and all this is a piece of simple service! Beshrew me, thy thousand merks were poor pay; thou thyself, too, hast suffered somewhat, if I can judge by what we gathered from thy incoherencies, when we dragged thee from beneath the body of him you murdered."

"I did not murder him!" hoarsely exclaimed Martin. "It is false! Who says I murdered him? Who saw me?"

"No matter who saw you—you did it, and you only."

"It is all a lie; I will swear I did not. I will take oath on oath I did not. There was none near to see me do it. I looked right and left, and there was nothing human in sight. None can say they saw me do it. I will call every saint to witness that I did not do it. I did not! I did not!" He looked shudderingly round him as he uttered this. The robber who had been for the water at this moment appeared with his helm brimming with the pure liquid. Martin sprung to him, seized it, and drank largely from it. Grif watched him with a scrutinising scowl, and after finishing the water which Martin left, said coolly—

"You have convicted yourself out of your own mouth. Look you, Martin du Bois, I mind not a broken pike about your committing the deed. You may do as many murders as you please for what I care; but you must not attempt to deceive me when I may have the chance of getting an extra thousand merks or so when I need them. *You did the deed:* I know it, and the knowledge may prove useful to me."

"I did not!" shouted Martin, clenching his hands, and staring Grif wildly in the face.

"It is of no use to deny it," persisted Grif: "you did the murder. Weak and faint as I was when we discovered you, I had sense enough to see that there was but one sword, that there was but one wounded—killed; that the wound was given in the *back*. His fingers were about your throat still when we discovered you. I need no more. Will you look on the dead man's face, and swear you did not do it?"

"No, no, no!" uttered Martin, hurriedly.

"Cowardly fool!" muttered Grif scornfully, yet with a triumphant grin on his coarse features. "I have him fast! You see," he continued, "I know all, Martin. Now listen to my proposition."

Hist!" said Nick Grim, advancing to him, and whispered just audible enough for Walter to catch—

"Life is returning to the body."

"Ha, is it so?" replied Grif, in the same tone.

"Yes, he breathes; he will shortly revive."

"Bear him a little way off, and—" here the voice became inaudible.

Walter shuddered, and grasped his sword, which

he had unsheathed in case of need. Grif watched a couple of men bear away the body, followed by Nick, then turned to Martin, and continued—

"Listen to my proposition. The maiden you bribed me to carry off for you is now in my power; four of my best men have borne her to Tonbridge, and are there awaiting you, according to your orders—that is, if they have not retired before the villagers, who probably are also by this time there. If the boors have gained Tonbridge, my men were prepared for them. I know their cunning too well, not to feel assured that Violet Evesham is still in their hands."

Violet trembled at the recollection of her situation, but Walter smiled, and muttered "We should be sure of nothing."

"Now I will guarantee her safe deliverance to thee for a second thousand merks, and upon payment of a third, no one shall ever hear that you slew Halbert Evesham."

"Who?" almost screamed Violet.

"Silence, for your life!" ejaculated Walter, in low but urgent tones. There was a dead silence for a moment. Grif waved his hand, and then proceeded—

"What say you to my proposition—you are quite wealthy enough to meet the demand easily?"

"I agree to everything," said Martin, abstractedly.

While he was uttering these words, Walter felt himself suddenly seized, dragged like lightning from his horse, Violet with him, and, with his steed, was hurried into Grif's presence, without the power of resistance, the surprise being so unexpected and effectual. Violet's shriek had betrayed them; at Grif's silent command, three or four men had stolen round, and so accomplished their capture.

"Violet Evesham!" cried Martin, the instant his eye lighted on her.

"Violet Evesham!" repeated Grif, with great astonishment. "How is this? Where's Quintal and his fellows?"

"I don't know," replied one of the captors; "but these prisoners were all that were near."

"Torches!" cried Grif; "light torches; it is too dark to distinguish features; possibly I may have the felicity of looking upon Wat Tyler, as the companion to the pride of the village—keep that horse still."

"I can hardly hold him," replied a robber, who was grasping the bridle with both hands, while the horse kept plunging restively.

"Then get one to help you," he cried, impatiently; "must I light a torch myself, you lazy villains? What makes you so tardy?"

Torches were brought. He took one, and cast a hasty glance at Violet, who, held by two men, was nearly fainting with fright. His eye rested but a moment on her, and then he held the torch full on Walter, who, disarmed, was in the custody of four men; the prodigious efforts he had made to get free, when seized, rendering such a number necessary. Even now they could scarcely hold him. Directly Grif saw his features, he started, and exclaimed, in accents of wonder—

"Sir Walter Manny!"

"Well, fellow!" he haughtily replied; "what then?"

"I am surprised at seeing thee," ejaculated Grif, looking very much so.

"No doubt," returned Walter, bitterly; "thou could'st not expect to see me in such vile company as thee and thy cut-throats. Give me but my sword, and my life on't you shall not see me long among thee."

"Did'st thou rescue that maiden?" asked Grif.

"Slave! how darest thou question me?" indignantly he exclaimed.

"It matters not; she is again in my power," said Grif, turning abruptly on his heel. He approached Martin du Bois, and exclaimed, "You agree to give me the two thousand merks?"

"I do!" uttered Martin eagerly, growing bolder, and gazing fixedly on Violet.

"Then the maiden is thine," observed Grif. "Mount that steed, and bear her where ye list; I shall expect the coin within two days, or I shall know where to apply for it."

"You shall have it!" cried Martin, and advanced to mount Walter's horse. As he approached, Walter exclaimed furiously—

"Hound! lay but a finger on the maiden, and if you have as many lives as there are leaves around us, I'll take them all. Dare but to pollute her with thy hands, stained with the blood of a foul murder, and the tortures which will be thine hereafter shall not be more fearful than those I will inflict upon thee."

Martin shrunk back, as Walter's eyes glared wildly upon him; but Grif, with a loud laugh, roared—

"Art thou a coward of so rank a nature as to fear a scolding tongue? Shame on thee! Mount the horse, and the girl shall be handed up to thee."

"Stand back!" thundered Walter, "nor defile my noble steed with thy foul carcase, thou mean, evil-minded reptile."

Evil actions make cowards of men! Martin du Bois, a wretched coward where his superstition was affected, was not deficient in courage when opposed to beings of mortal mould; he would have fought with bravery in a field of battle or in a single encounter; but now his sense of his own villany weighed him down so heavily, that he cowered like a beaten cur before the look and voice of Walter.

"Must I lift thee, too, on the steed?" sneered Grif, observing him still hesitate. "On with thee, nor hang back like a terrified child."

Martin plucked up spirit, and passing Walter, who struggled tremendously to get at him, prepared to mount the still restive horse. He put his foot in the stirrup and leaped into the saddle, at sight of which Walter grew outrageous.

"Ho! Tricksy," he shouted. "Up, boy! *Lancer!* Heigh! *Lancer*, Tricksy!"

Tricksy evidently understood his master; for he reared, plunged, and threw up his heels with such force, as to fling Martin over his head; after which act he kicked up such desperate gambols, that the men flew from him in all directions.

"Cut him down!" roared Grif; but no one offered to do it. One of the band, however, bent a cross-bow, and was about to discharge it, when Walter cried—

"Hold! stay thy hand, I will quiet him!" He uttered a few words loudly; the horse, which was very powerful, ceased his antics, and walked directly up to him, without any of the men attempting to oppose him;—when close to his master he stood still.

"The devil himself is in that beast," said Grif, looking with no small amount of wonder at the perfect command which Walter displayed over him; "however, it is of no use to attempt again to mount him, Martin. Away, and take the girl with thee; two of my men shall accompany thee to the borders of the wood, and the rest thou must do thyself: away, and lose no time."

"I will not go—I cannot go," cried Violet, hysterically, as Martin approached her. "Oh, Walter, let them not drag me away!"

"Hell-hounds—devils!" shouted Walter, who employing the most desperate exertions, succeeded in getting

loose, by flinging up the fellows who held him, and made to Violet's side; but by Grif's command two or three more sprang to the assistance of their comrades: they flung him to the ground, and bound his arms firmly to his side ere they suffered him to rise to his feet.

"Sir Walter Manny," cried Grif, "we are compelled to use violence; you bring it on yourself. I would advise thee to remain quiet, or thy life may pay the forfeit of thy resistance."

"Dog, you dare not take it!" cried Walter.

"Dare not?"

"No. My fate is not to die by the hand of such a brutal, unhanged ruffian as thou."

"Rail on, Sir Walter, I heed it not from thee; I will not take thy life, because I owe mine to thee."

"Thou?"

"Ay, me; thou dost not remember me, but I do thee well; I served under thee; I was with thee at the battle of Halidon-hill. It was I who seized a standard from a Scotchman, whom I slew, but was on the instant surrounded, and had to fight desperately to keep my prize. I called for aid; you were nigh; I saw you; I uttered your name loudly; and you cut your way to me as I was beaten down. You received the blow on your battle-axe intended for my skull, and bestrode my body until I was rescued by others of our party coming to your support. My life was thus saved by you, and I swore at the time I would repay the obligation when opportunity offered."

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] Engraved by J. Wall.

"I remember the fact," said Walter, "but not you. However, since you owe me the obligation, repay it now; release me and this maiden, and I shall hold the debt fully acquitted."

"I cannot do that; my word is passed to Martin du Bois, and he must have the girl. When they are beyond pursuit I will give thee thy horse, thy weapon, and thy liberty, but not till then."

"I scorn thy paltry clemency," indignantly cried Walter; "give me my life and liberty, forsooth! Thou must indeed fear me when you bind me thus, and have all thy tribe of dogs well armed around me."

"We fear *thee* not, Sir Walter," exclaimed Grif; "do not think that; the only fear is that you should bring death on yourself, and the country lose a good soldier in time of need."

"Indeed!" sneered Walter; "yet it looks as though ye were a gang of cowardly braggarts, when ye find need of binding an unarmed man in the presence of twenty or thirty who are well provided with weapons."

"Your blood on your own head, then, if you attempt to resist my will," said Grif, chafing at the sneers of Walter. "Release his arms from the thong, but keep your hold upon him."

Walter chuckled as he saw the effect of his sarcasm, and when released made no movement to get free from those who held him.

"Scélérat," said Grif, when the men had obeyed his order, "take one of the stoutest devils with you, and lead this girl to such place on the border of the wood, as Martin du Bois may direct you; when you have completed your work, return hither with all speed. Now, Martin, wait for no further urging, but off with your prize at once."

"Take her if thou durst, thou contemptible villain!" exclaimed Walter, hotly; "and if thou dost, there's not a spot on earth shall screen thee from my vengeance."

"I heed not thy threats," replied Martin, struggling to master his shame, "I will have her; and when I spurn her from me as valueless thou mayst take my place."

"Wretch!" shouted Walter. What more he uttered was borne away by a sudden hurricane of wind, which tore with frightful force through the wood, bending the trees as if they were no more than willow-wands, roaring and howling with deafening violence, while the torches were in an instant extinguished; but the place was as suddenly illumined by a fearfully vivid flash of lightning, showing every thing far plainer than the torches had done. Then, in a moment, all was as dark as death, and the darkness was suddenly accompanied by a tremendous crash of thunder of stunning loudness. The trees dashed to and fro; the leaves rattled and whistled, so that nothing but their clamour could be heard. In this frightful moment Walter collected all his energy and strength; making a powerful struggle, he threw his detainers from him as if they were children; rushed to the spot where his sword had been thrown; gained it, and flew to Violet. He tore her from the hands of the ruffians who held her, and cut one of them down as he offered to oppose him.

"Fear nothing, love," he cried to Violet, who, not knowing in the darkness who had seized her, shrieked with fright. "Fear not! this is I, Walter. I will save thee, or we will perish together."

He gained his steed, and exclaimed—"Ho! still, Tricksy!" vaulted into the saddle at a bound, and the next instant Violet was before him. All this was the work of a minute. Another vivid flash of lightning showed them to Grif and his band on the back of the war-horse, which seemed to fly, dashing through the devils; Walter waving his sword, looking like the angel Michael bearing an unsullied spirit to Heaven. Another moment, the darkness hid them from sight.

"Ha, hell and furies!" roared Grif. "Get torches—pursue them." But his words were drowned in an awful burst of thunder, which followed the flash of lightning, and seemed to shake the whole forest to its foundation. He, however, repeated his command with stentorian might, and efforts were made to kindle the torches, but with little effect. The wind was roaring and howling—the trees crashing—the thunder pealing, and the uproar of the storm continuing as much as ever. At this juncture, a robber hastily approached Grif, and, with a face which, in the feeble light of one torch, whose blaze was with difficulty preserved, looked white with fright. He shouted at the top of his voice—

"That last crash was a thunderbolt! it has shivered a tree, killed Nick Grim, and two of our comrades."

"D—ation!" roared Grif; "everything seems against me. Did the old man perish as well?"

"No, he revived; but in the confusion has escaped."

"Furies! Away, all of you, in search: take different paths; where'er you light on him, drag him here."

The men obeyed him, and dispersed in various directions, seeking those where they thought it most likely to find him; while Martin du Bois, who had his superstitious fit again on him, suffered himself to be led, like a terrified child clinging to its parent for protection, by Grif to another part of the wood; and the storm raged on as furiously as though it would never cease.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Away!—away!—and on we dash!—
Torrents less rapid and less rash.
Away!—away!—
* * * * *
We rustled through the leaves like wind,
Left shrubs, and trees and wolves behind."

BYRON.

"—— together,
Rose at an instant, learned, play'd, eat together,
And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,
Still we went coupled, and inseparable."

SHAKSPERE.

"And plants, at whose names the verse seems loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew,
And agaries and fungi, with mildew and mould,
Started like mist from the wet ground cold."

SHELLEY.

"O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!"

SHAKSPERE.

WAT TYLER and his friends, when they quitted the band of devils, pushed on for the spot where Martin had appointed Violet to be carried. They felt not their recent exertion, in their hope to overtake her; they

flagged not, stopped not; but raced through covert and glade, over brake and briar, as if there was no limit to their strength or breath. They passed the branch of the stream where Violet had been recovered by the outlaws from her swoon, and kept on their path with untiring vigour. Now cheering each other, or now speculating upon the certainty of securing the cherished idol of their birth-place from danger. Occasionally they referred to their recent victory, and there was no small amount of self-gratulation and pride—pardonable, it is true. As they talked over their success, they judged of all things to come by what had just passed; they already, so sanguine were they, had in imagination rescued Violet—captured the robbers—inflicted summary vengeance upon them, and restored the maiden to the village in triumph.

"Wat," cried Michael; "don't you think, after we have won Violet back, and placed her safely in her home, and in her father's arms, that we ought to take the first opportunity to return and clear the wood of these—these—hang the wretches, I can't find a name bad enough for them."

"Their own name will suit them well enough," said Wat; "devils are they in all things."

"That's true, they are devils, but only here. I am thinking when they quit this world they'll find they are not devils below, nor kin even; unless down there they treat relations very roughly. I wonder if they do; I'll ask Father Gregory when I go next to confession. He is very wise and learned in these things, and I'll be sworn he can tell me."

"Yes," laughed Wat; "but if he has such acquaintance, I should be loth to keep his company. Halbert often says, a man's friends shows his mind; he never mixes on terms of friendly intimacy with those he despises, or whose acts he condemns."

"Ah, that's all very well. But Father Gregory is quite as well—that is to say, better acquainted with heavenly things than devilish. He knows both sides of the question—don't you see, Wat?"

"Yes, but he takes care to let us only know *one*," returned Wat; "however, that's nothing to do with what you were about to say, of clearing the wood of these ruffians."

"Yes," exclaimed Michael; "I conceive, for the villanous outrage upon us, in taking the glory of our village away—which Grif of the Bloody Hand and his crew have done—we ought to attack them, hang up Grif on a fine tall pine tree, cut down those who won't surrender, and, making prisoners of the rest, ship them off to the wars; then we should have no fear of their carrying off Violet again."

"It sounds well, Michael; and I would be the first to join the scheme—"

"Of course," interpolated Michael.

"But I question if you persuade our neighbours to attack, and risk their lives in doing it against men—I mean devils, who do not molest them."

"Not molest them!" uttered Michael, with surprise; "why what do you call carrying off Violet, then?"

"Not molesting *them!* although, loving her as we all do—ah! and who is there who would not love her, if their eyes once lighted on her fair delicate form?—we all feel it as an individual loss, and each resents it as an injury done to himself. But even in committing this outrage, they have touched neither their lives nor property; taking from them nothing which they could not spare and exist. They are not like your tax-gatherer, who will have whatever the king chooses to impose, and cares nothing whether you starve after he has drained your purse; or, what is worse, the shelves where your food should rest. They all love Violet dearly, as you see by their hazarding their lives for her, but they could lose her and yet live. She is not their money, their food, their living; they could spare her—with difficulty, I acknowledge—but they *could spare her*. And think you, when they have her again among them, they will risk their lives to oust robbers who touch not their household things, when they bow to others who grasp and take their all?"

"It seems right as you say it; but yet I could not expect to hear you talk so. Why, if these cursed dogs had taken off my Flora, why—why—why, I would have exterminated them, one and all. I should have expected every body in the village to help me; and if they would'nt, I would have hit on some means to inclose the wood, so that they could not get out; have set fire to it, and burnt every dog in it!"

"You would have been revenged," said Wat, smiling.

"Revenged! rather. I thought you loved Violet more than you do; but, from what you have just said, I find you don't so much as I expected."

"Not love Violet so much as you expected, Michael!" returned Wat, with quickness, stung by his remark. "Go to! you talk foolishly. I was speaking of the villagers, not of myself. Not love Violet so much as you expected! Have I a thought with which she is not connected?—a dream in which she does not appear—a hope of which she is not the subject—or a wish which embraces not her? Not love her?—was ever saint worshipped as I love her? Did not Father Gregory chide me when I told him, years ago, that I would rather kneel down and lift my hands in gentle prayer to my dear little sister Violet, and swear to her, while her sweet smiling face was shining on me, never to do wrong or shame, than to the blessed Virgin, of whom he talked so much, and praised with such fervour? Not love her! I have felt my heart full to bursting, Michael, and the water rush to my eyes, all with joy, when I have seen her happy, smiling, and delighted; and when she lay ill of that burning fever, after falling into the flood, and was so gentle and quiet, so placid and uncomplaining, speaking such kind words for all that was done for her—at that time, when old folks shook their heads and said nothing—when I implored them to tell me if she would live and not die—then, did I not watch over her by day, as a miser would his gold that he was hourly in expectation of losing; and at night lay at her door, or beneath her window, and weep and pray until daylight again brought me to her bedside, to look upon her pale calm face—"

"Ah, I remember that time well, Wat," interrupted Michael, thoughtfully; "you looked like a ghost; I scarce ever saw you then, but when I did I shuddered and wept, because I heard them say that you would die too; that Violet was much too beautiful to live, and your acts were far beyond your years; and those who were wise so young were short lived. I shall never forget it."

"Well, if you remember that, why say now I do not love her so much as you expected? I tell you, Michael, were you and all our friends to turn back at once, I would go on alone, and never quit the pursuit till I found and saved her. There is no one here feels now as I feel. My heart throbs—my head burns; I conjure up all sorts of frightful things—all manner of evil which she may endure; and then I think we crawl and crawl, and the way grows longer and longer."

"I shall not be sorry when we reach there—but we are not crawling; I call it a pretty tolerable trot for

us all to keep up well such a distance," said Michael. "I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, Wat; I did not mea it; and I now see I confounded two things with each other. Never mind, Wat; don't be downhearted; we shall soon be up with the rascals, they must move at such a pace they will not be able to offer her any wrong."

"I fear not that much; for there is one, whom I think I can trust well, upon their heels," observed Wat. "I expected to have seen him long before, but I suppose some accident has prevented him keeping his promise; still, it is a consolation to know she has a friend near her."

"Who is it, Wat? Do I know him?" inquired Michael.

"I should think not," was the reply. "I first met him this morning; it was he who told me all about the plan to carry off Violet."

"Indeed! Where did you meet with him?"

"In the wood. I had come here to kill some game for Violet's table; as I was sauntering along a wolf sprung upon me; we had a struggle, and I killed him. Just as I turned to leave I saw this stranger standing at my elbow. I neither heard nor saw him come, but there he was."

"It was not a devil?" said Michael, crossing himself.

"He was dressed like one; but if he is, I can only say he is a good one. I don't know whether they appear to you in that manner, but you can ask Father Gregory."

"Pshaw! you are jesting. What is he? what is his name?"

"I cannot answer either question—he did not tell me; but he knows a great many things; some of which he told me—one of them was this infernal plot we are now striving to defeat, and the way to thwart it; he told me also who contrived it; and, as I have told you, I have had my revenge of him. How tediously long the way seems. You are flagging, friends—keep on, keep on; the grass has grown an inch since we started. Hurrah! on, on!"

"A thought has struck me, Wat," cried Michael, after increasing his speed at the incitement of Wat. "Do you think these rascals will keep on to the gate leading to Tonbridge Castle?"

"Yes, without doubt they will. They expect there to meet the fellow who hired them."

"Will they stay there?"

"For some time, doubtless."

"Very well. I know a much shorter cut than keeping on the beaten track; and, therefore, instead of doing so, we will take the shorter path, and be there almost as soon as they; we shall thus make up for the start they have of us."

"Are you sure you know the path well?"

"Quite sure; I have been it often: it is rather intricate, but I can thread it well."

"Do not mislead us, for the Holy Virgin's sake. Time is everything to us; and if you should mistake your way, and we get lost in some intricacy, it will defeat all our efforts, and render what we have done next to nothing."

"You may put trust in me now, Wat, if you ever did; it is of no use to say I will forfeit my head if I take you wrong; but I will forfeit your friendship, and I think that the worst of the two."

"If you have a doubt let us keep on the old track; it is better to make up a length of way by an increase of speed, than lose time in attempting to find the shortest path, and missing it."

"I have not a doubt about it, Wat; did not Flora stay for months last year at Tonbridge; and when did I miss a week without seeing her four times out of it? No, no; I know the way well."

"I am very glad to hear it, Michael; lead on—be on your mettle; see how quick and well you can do it. Fancy that Flora is taken from you, and you are in pursuit of those who have robbed you of her."

"I need no spurring of that sort. I look on Violet as a sort of angel, whom if we lose, ill will befall the village; besides, when Flora heard of her being carried off, she wept and wrung her hands, and told me to stand by you heart and soul, and not come back without her; neither will I."

"Nor I, so help me heaven!" uttered Wat, energetically, "unless I know that she has been by some fortunate circumstance rescued and restored."

"Amen!" cried Michael. "We turn off here, and you shall find that this saves a plaguy long round."

"Go on, I am all on fire until I learn something respecting her."

Waving his hand, Michael turned from the broad glade they were pursuing, and struck into a narrower one, branching off to the right, the whole band of villagers grasping their pikes and bills, swiftly following, and answering his animating cheer with a loud hurrah. The way, as Michael had said, was very intricate, and in some places almost impassable; but the earnest hearts caring little for them, surmounted them with comparative ease. Now they rushed through narow dells, then emerged into wide glades; from coverts and thickets they passed again through dells, until the way seemed so complicated, Wat exclaimed—

"This seems a complete tangle of alleys and thickets; first this way, then that. Art sure, Michael, you are right?"

"Quite sure! We have much of this winding path to thread, but I know it as well as I do my right hand; you will say presently I had need to know it, the worst is to come; keep up your spirits, it is not much farther, and we burst all at once on the place."

On they went as perseveringly as before, the way growing more and more entangled. Sometimes while on a path, and as they imagined they were to proceed along it, they would find it turn suddenly off, and appear to lead in the same direction they had come. Michael struck off into another, at the end of which there appeared several small lanes, formed by trees, diverging in every direction, bewildering the villagers as they looked upon them; but Michael chose one and pursued it with confidence, the rest following and trusting implicitly to his guidance. At times they would almost have to grope their way through some dark dell, and then suddenly burst out into the broad sunshine. There seemed no end to their journey; brake and thicket, dell and glade, rose up after each other in rapid succession, seeming as if they grew there purposely to intercept their progress; but they complained not, they kept on manfully, leaping the broken ground, dashing through the marshy spots, and threading the entangled brakes of brushwood and gorse unwearyingly. They seemed to feel each step brought them nearer to their desired object, and they were resolved not to cry out because the way was long and difficult.

Would that we could all do through life what these simple villagers did in working their way through that intricate wood!

The way, which had been gradually increasing in entanglement, grew worse and worse; instead of all keeping in a body, they were obliged to separate and pass in twos, sometimes singly, and never more than three abreast. Trees, mingled with each other in

inextricable confusion, shut out daylight at each step, until they could scarce distinguish each other; beech, oaks, alder, larch, and pine trees, were almost wedged together, each struggling to live, and killing the other in the attempt; long grass and rank weeds grew about their stems in enormous profusion, while water in black murky pools lay here and there making a home for toads and loathly things, while snakes and other creeping creatures luxuriated among the weeds and fungi that arose out of the marshy ground.

"This is a hideous place, Michael," said Wat.

"Ay! but it is like night before morning, or winter before spring, or anything disagreeable before what is pleasant, for this is the last thicket we pass; at the end of this is the dell and stream and gate we seek," replied Michael.

"Is it so?" rapidly uttered Wat; "then we shall soon know the worst. Push on, friends—push on! Are you tired, Michael? I am obliged to hang back to keep pace with you."

"I am not tired, but I think I should soon be, if I were to try and keep pace with your impatient wishes."

"And yet you do not think I love Violet," sarcastically exclaimed Wat.

"I deserve the taunt, Wat," exclaimed Michael; "but you must forgive me, because I have shortened your distance for you—here is the place."

"Halt, friends; let us reconnoitre," cried Wat; "a minute's forethought often saves an hour's labour. I will advance first, and when I summon you to approach, do so with all speed; but wait here until you hear my summons.

"Shall I not come with you?" said Michael; I may be of service."

"If you list," returned Wat; "but be silent, we may have need of caution."

"He advanced, followed by Michael, who seemed delighted at accompanying him, and reached the thicket that the stranger had entered when he led Sir Walter Manny to Violet's rescue.

"How thick the brushwood is," said Wat, in a low voice; "there is no parting it to look into the dell."

"No," returned Michael, you must go round; but there are plenty of broad-trunked trees to screen you from sight, if occasion requires them."

"That is right," uttered Wat, and went on.

In a few moments they reached the dell, but there was no one in sight. Wat rushed into it, and uttered an exclamation of bitter disappointment. Violet was not there, nor did he see any one near; a spear, clove in twain, caught his eye; he darted to it and picked it up; at the same moment a cry from Michael induced him to turn his head, and then he beheld his friend with a countenance upon which intense astonishment was depicted, mingled with horror, pointing to a tall beech-tree, on which hung the dead bodies of Quintal, Belitre, Growl, and Luc.

For a second he was paralyzed as he looked upon this extraordinary sight. He darted up to the tree, and gazed upon the lifeless bodies, turning about in the rising wind, with a stupified wonder. Mastering his sensation of horror, he scrutinized the dead men and perceived they had all met a violent death ere they had been suspended to the foot of the tree. The blood was still fresh in their wounds.

"What can be the meaning of this strange sight?" exclaimed Michael; "these are of the band of Grif of the Bloody Hand."

"And they are the very villains who tore Violet away. My strange friend has been at work; nobly has he kept his word. Michael, I am sure Violet is ved."

"I hope so; at all events, these cut-throats are punished. Hey! what is that which that fellow has twisted round his leg?" suddenly cried Michael, pointing to the leg of Quintal. Wat went up to it, and untwisted a roll of parchment from the ankle, and proceeded to unrol it from something soft which it enclosed before it encircled Quintal's leg. He opened it, and a small dead snake dropped out.

"An adder!" cried Michael, with no little astonishment. "Here is wonder upon wonder."

"It is a missive from the stranger," returned Wat.

"A missive from the stranger!" repeated Michael; yes—but who's to read it?"

"Why I, of course—who else? it is addressed to me," replied Wat.

"You, Wat, you!" exclaimed Michael, with surprise. "Why, I did not know you could read."

"I have known how these five years."

"Who taught you—Father Gregory?"

"Father Gregory—no; Halbert Evesham. He taught Violet and I at the same time."

"Ah! there again. He has taught you everything—made a man of you, Wat. There's not an art he hasn't given you lessons in, besides always talking about rights and justice. Ah! you were fortunate in being a pet of his. You can write too, I have no doubt."

"I can."

"To see the good luck of some people! Why did you never tell me, your oldest friend, this?"

"Because you never asked before; and I am not fond of boasting of having what others have never taken the pains to acquire. But no more of this; call our friends, and I will read the letter."

"I am spared the trouble; here they come. Look here, friends—here's wonders in store for you; justice done on these devils by invisible hands, and Violet rescued."

"Hurrah!" shouted the villagers.

"Another, lads, and a loud one," cried Michael.

"Hurrah!" they shouted again with tremendous force.

"Now, what does the missive say?" asked Michael.

"You shall hear," replied Wat. "These are the words. 'Young friend—' "

"Meaning you," interrupted Michael.

"Yes, yes," said Wat, impatiently; "listen. 'The maiden is saved—rescued by a youth on a war horse. He cut the bloodhounds down with the strength and dexterity of a Lion-heart. The maiden recognised him as a friend, and he has borne her to Brenchley, I have no doubt with speed and safety. You may again see me when you least expect it; I am a stranger, but no less a friend. I honour a free spirit and a noble heart. I believe thee to have them, and to all such I am a friend. Haste thee back to the village—thy valiant arm and stout heart may be required. Do not wait to learn by experience that Grif of the Bloody Hand suffers no insults without revenging them in blood. Stay not here to wonder at what you see; justice has only punished remorseless, treacherous, sanguinary ruffians. Now, and at all times, while life inhabits this unhappy frame, you will find as firm a friend as Grif of the Bloody Hand and his devils will a fearful enemy in a——' "

"A what?" asked Michael, observing Wat stop.

"I cannot say—here it ends," returned Wat. "Stay—I have it; he must mean a snake. This dead adder was inclosed in the missive, and there is no signature."

"It's a very peculiar signature, at all events," said Michael. "What can Grif have to fear from a snake?"

"I do not know, but that is evidently his meaning," ejaculated Wat; "and if this is his work," pointing to the suspended bodies of the devils, "he shows that he is a snake who knows well how to use a sting."

"His interference in, and the whole affair itself is a very strange matter," ejaculated Michael. "I should like to know who and what he is, where he comes from, why he takes such interest in Violet, why he is a determined enemy of Grif and his band, and why he signs himself a snake."

"A very moderate amount of curiosity," laughed Wat, "and evinces a laudable desire to become better acquainted with one who has done us service. Let him be who or what he may, I am eternally bound to him for that he hath done, and will not scruple, should he ever need my assistance, to render him my services to the extent of my ability freely and frankly. And now, friends, since it is evident that Violet hath been rescued, and those who carried her away punished to the death, I think we may return somewhat contented homewards, with the hope that we shall there behold her safe and happy in her father's arms, and have her again come smiling and gladdening our hearts with her sweet presence. On for Brenchley!"

The villagers acquiesced; and they prepared again to return to the village which they had quitted in such haste and confusion.

"What do you mean to do with these carrion?" asked Michael of Wat Tyler just as they were leaving, pointing to the hanged robbers.

"Leave them there to feed the crows on," replied Wat, "a symbol of our vengeance."

"But we did not hang them," said Michael.

"Very true," exclaimed Wat; "but we should if we had overtaken them with Violet in their possession. It is on her account they perished, and therefore it matters not who did the deed—there they hang as a warning to any other villains who may feel inclined to follow their cursed example."

"And there let them hang with all my heart—they have earned it richly," returned Michael; "although their death scarce wipes off the debt owing to them for their horrible atrocities. But we must be contented. I have, however, every hope that the devil will pay them in full. Did you hear what they did the other side of Tonbridge a month since?"

"No," replied Wat; "but I can believe the story, however horrible."

"Ah!" returned Michael; "but I think it is almost more horrible than you could believe. Here, Mark Grayling, you tell Wat Tyler; you heard it all from one of the sufferers, and know it better than I do."

"It is a sad story, Master Wat," said a tall, raw-boned, but good-looking youth, in reply to Michael's request; "they acted worse than devils, I do believe, if it is possible to do so. A king's messenger, accompanied by a few armed servants, bearing a very large sum of money about him, passed through the Weald on his way to London. He arrived safely at Wrotham, and fully expected to get through the remainder of the wood without interruption; but Grif had heard of the sum he carried, and the smallness of his escort. He determined to make the king's money his, but the messenger having the start of him, reached Wrotham before Grif could overtake him. It was soon known that the 'Bloody Hand' and his devils were in the neighbourhood. It came to the ears of the messenger, who quickly guessed the purport of their visit, and called upon the villagers to protect him. They answered the call with promptness; and when Grif, emboldened by the superiority of his numbers, as he thought, and the terrible renown they had acquired, proceeded to attack in the open day the hostel at which the messenger was staying, he was opposed by such quantities of the village folks, and with so much spirit and determination, that he was beaten off—a feat which was no sooner accomplished, than the messenger, taking advantage of the opportunity, after thanking his defenders, and promising to lay their valorous services before the king, departed, and, for what we know, arrived in London safely with the money. That night, when the villagers were all locked in repose, Grif and his band burst into the village; they carried torches in their hands, and fired the cottages. As the villagers rushed out naked from their beds in horror and consternation, they were shot at with cross-bows and speared by these villains. They had no chance of resistance, and the monstrous acts which these hell-hounds committed are almost too awful to tell. They captured a large number of the villagers, and then erected gibbets, upon which they hung them by their hands or arms. When they had done this, the fiends, with brutal violence, ravished their wives and daughters before their agonised eyes, without their being able to move a finger in their behalf. After carrying on this damnable conduct till they were satiated, they threw the wretched, maddened females into the blazing embers of the burning cottages, and shot dead the tortured creatures who were hanging in intense agony by their limbs. After doing every deed which can be imagined teeming with heartless fiendishness, they plundered and ransacked every place the fire had not destroyed, and departed, leaving scarce a vestige of the once sweet little village remaining."

"Infernal monsters!" uttered Wat, earnestly, when Mark had ceased. "Has any account of it been sent to London?"

"Yes," returned Mark Grayling; "but the Court are too much occupied with the approaching war to attend now to it; but at the special application of the king's messenger, they have promised, when an opportunity serves, to look into it."

"Which means they will do nothing further in the matter," remarked Wat. "I never felt the force of Halbert Evesham's remarks so much as now. I would, indeed, be far better if our soldiers were to destroy the marauders and bloodthirsty maintainers at home, than expend blood and treasure in fighting abroad for that which can do us no good, exhausts our wealth, and leaves our country internally defenceless, and the prey of every band of roving villains who choose to congregate. I fear those who are high in the land will, one day, make a fearful discovery of the error they are committing."

"Now, don't you think, Wat," exclaimed Michael, "that it would be no bad thing if we were to congregate after a little while, and clear the wood of these horrible devils?"

"I think now, as I thought then," responded Wat, "that it would be well to do so, but I doubted the possibility of persuading our friends to join the project. I could not expect that after they had risen, fought for, and rescued Violet, that they would again unite and risk their lives to clear the wood of these villains, upon the same grounds, the same provocation, which they had already been successful in avenging. Now, however, I have better hopes. A whole community have suffered a tremendous outrage, one too awful even to think upon; and, after what has occurred, we may be subjected to the most horrible fate, unless we prepare ourselves to meet and prevent it. This frightful affair leads me to believe that, if Grif recovers—for I only think he was stunned after the fall I gave him—he will attempt to inflict on Brenchley the same horrors he perpetrated at Wrotham."

"He will find it harder work than he did there," muttered Grayling, between his teeth.

"Yes, providing we are not attacked at the same disadvantage," rejoined Wat. "Let us hasten home, and make such preparations to meet them as shall defeat any such hellish project if he should attempt to execute it, and I have little doubt he will try it."

"We will return the same way, because it is nearer," said Michael.

"No," replied Wat, "it is getting dark; and, if I am not deceived, a storm is brewing. The wind is beginning to moan and sigh very much, as if it gave warning of what is to come; therefore we had better return by the path we all know, and then there is no fear of mistaking our way in the darkness."

"I can guide you as unfailingly in the dark as in the light," urged Michael.

"Probably, Michael," rejoined Wat. "You guided us here well and truly, but I have seen enough of the nature of the way to mistrust my own power of leading with certainty through that maze, even were I much better acquainted with it than you are. There will be no stars to assist, and the difference in the distance, though still important, is not of such moment as before. We will go the old way; and, if the devils should not visit Brenchley to-night, who will join me in the morning to rout them from here?"

"I will, of course," said Michael.

"And I, with my heart, hand, and sword," said Grayling.

"And I," exclaimed another.

"And I, and I," repeated a dozen voices.

"If you will leave it a day or two I think I know a score or so of hardy lads who will help us. They have good blades and rare stout hearts," suggested Grayling.

"Can you depend on them?" asked Wat.

"To the death," returned Grayling. "I need only say that they are all, in one way or another, connected with the sufferers at Wrotham, and I think you will then be satisfied of their hearty co-operation with you, and their unflinching determination to conquer or perish."

"Have any of your friends suffered, Mark?" asked Wat, hesitatingly.

"Ay, Wat Tyler," exclaimed he, dashing a tear from his eye, "an old friend of my father's and all his family perished. I—I was to have been married to his only daughter to-day—to-day, Wat Tyler; but she perished as the others did. I have searched among the blackened ruins to find her out in vain." Here he suddenly threw himself upon his knees with a passionate burst of agony, and clasped his hands convulsively, as he uttered, in tones which wrung with anguish the hearts of those who heard him,—"Oh, my God! if ever you listened to me when I prayed to thee an innocent child who had never done or even thought sin, hear me now, as I supplicate thee to give me vengeance—deep, bitter, full revenge upon the fiends who have murdered her, and withered, blasted me for ever!" He covered his streaming eyes with his hands, and his whole frame shook like an aspen as he wept like a child. Wat raised him, and said in a low, kind voice,—

"Mark Grayling, I will aid thee in revenging this bitter visitation with heart and hand. I will unite me with thee to accomplish it, or, failing, perish with you, so help me God!"

"Let me take the same oath, Mark," cried Michael with earnestness. "We will be brothers in this affair; be successful, or die as becomes men."

Grayling took both of their hands in his and squeezed them hard; but his heart was too full to permit him to utter a word, and Wat, with a kind endeavour to turn the current of his thoughts, said,

"Now let us on to Brenchley; we have much to do ere the night hath passed, and have left but a small amount of time."

He led the way from the place in which they were congregated, and followed by the villagers, took the beaten path to their dwelling-place. When they had journeyed some distance, almost in silence, Michael suddenly exclaimed,

"Who can the youth be who has rescued Violet?"

"I have been trying to think, but without success," returned Wat.

"It was stated in that missive that they were known to each other," observed Michael.

"It was, and that renders it more puzzling."

"I thought you were acquainted with all the persons she knew."

"Not all; this scoundrel who strove to carry her off I knew not by sight; still I knew that he visited, although I never saw him there; and he who has rescued her I have been calling upon my memory for, but can recollect no youth with whom she is acquainted who was likely to be here and save her. Well, it is no matter; if he has acted well and nobly, we are equally bound to him. If he be not a friend of long standing, he has behaved as one; and if he is one, he has done his duty. I would I had been him to have done it. I would I had!"

"It would have been more pleasant, truly. I know I should almost be vexed if, in the event of Flora having been carried off, she had been saved by any one but me; and if she had I should not have been able to rest until I found out who he was; particularly if I was given to understand he was a friend whom I had never seen or heard of. Can't you remember any one Violet ever talked about having met, that you never saw? If ever she did meet any one, I am sure she would tell you. Come, try and remember."

"You seem very anxious to have this mystery explained as clearly as that of the devils upon which Father Gregory has enlightened you."

"I confess my curiosity; but it seems so very strange altogether."

"Well, I will satisfy you as far as I can satisfy myself. I do remember one person of whom Violet spoke; one she met at Lamberhurst when staying there some few months since."

"I thought you must. What did she say of him?"

"She spoke in the highest terms of praise."

"Indeed! How did you like that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not feel annoyed and vexed?"

"Annoyed! I do not understand you. Annoyed! Certainly not; why should I have felt annoyed and vexed?"

"I'll tell you if you will answer my question."

"What is it?"

"What did she say about him when speaking in praise of him?"

"By the Holy Mother! Michael, you are a singular fellow. What should she say of him when speaking praisingly, but that he was handsome even to a fault—that his manners were noble, yet gentle; engaging, yet commanding—that the charms of his person were equalled by those of his mind, and his heart was as bold and fearless as it was generous and free?"

"And yet you were not annoyed?"

"Certainly not; it is pleasant to me to hear of a gallant, noble heart, and I felt proud to think that Violet had met with such an one. Wherefore should I have been annoyed?"

"You call me a singular fellow. Marry! you are an enigma. Did you not go almost out of the way to tell me how you loved Violet; and still say you love her better than your life, do you not?"

"Assuredly; but what has that to do with the question?"

"Everything; that is exactly it. You love her and she loves you, and she tells you that she has met with one handsomer than any one she ever saw—that he is this, that, and the other that is noble, gentle, engaging, gallant, and commanding. Having mentioned every quality that a woman loves in a man, and, my life on't, expressed in warm terms; almost in plain words telling you that the heart you fancied yours was given to another—Ha, you start! Now do you wonder why I asked the question?"

"You have placed it in a light in which I never dreamed of viewing it. When she spoke warmly and earnestly of him, which she did I well remember, I thought it was only in admiration of the qualities, not the person—qualities which I strove hard to possess. In hearing her praise him I fancied she would one day speak so of me, and attributed her eulogy to the love she had for what was good and noble, and no more. Your words have wounded me sorely, Michael, for they lead me to believe it may be as you surmise; and if it is, then farewell to all. But no, I will harbour no such thought; she is free, confiding, without guile or disguise, and would have told me if such had been the case. Still it is strange. It might be so;—yet it cannot be. I will not think of it; but if it should—oh! Michael, Michael, I wish you had never thought this, or had never mentioned it."

"I am sorry to have hurt your feelings, Wat. I wouldn't have done it for worlds if I had known. Only I thought it very strange that she should say so much in favour of one, and that one not you. I am sure I have pained you by what I have said, and I beg your pardon for doing it. I know I should feel myself, if any one was to put such a thought in my head, as though they had whipped a sixteen-inch blade into my chest; but it is better to know such a thing early than find it out when it might break your heart to discover it."

"It may be so, Michael, but I would rather have discovered it myself—suddenly—at once—than be racked by the tortures of doubt and suspense. Let us on—I feel as I have never felt. Let us hasten on; would that I was with her now. Oh, Violet, Violet, it can never be; yet if it should—oh, God, if it should! Let us hasten on, Michael, we are creeping like snails—quicker, quicker."

"Now would I give worlds that some kind friend had slit my tongue like a cur's ears, ere it had led me into this. I am a fool, Wat, and say and think things which no one in their senses would ever dream of. I have no doubt that Violet only praised this young stranger because she thought him like you, and was only earnest in his praise to show you how much she loved you; because you possess all those qualities which she gave to the youth, and in saying so much wished you to say to yourself, 'I am like this, and if Violet loves this in a stranger, what must she feel for one who surpasses him, and whom she has known, ay, and loved, from childhood!' That's it, I'll wager, my head, and a deuced thick one it must be ever to have put aught in your mind but what I now suggest."

"Pray heaven it may be so," groaned Wat.

"I would lay a thousand worlds that it is, if I had them, and none but I would have thought otherwise; only you see, Wat, I love Flora with all my heart and soul, and so does she me: but then I fancy she does almost every good-looking young man too; at least she will laugh and joke, and smile, when I think she shouldn't, and dance and romp with others as well as me. I frown and look grave, and then she laughs more than ever; and if I continue, she pouts and becomes ill friends with me, but loses not a smile or a joke with others. This makes me sometimes miserable. I don't think she knows how those little, I don't like to call them unkindnesses, though they seem such, but I don't think she is aware that these peculiarities cut me to the heart; they make it bleed with more agony than any knife would, but I strive not to let her know it; and she sees my weak points and trifles with them, will praise a fellow when she sees I don't like it, will smile and joke with him, and laugh at me because I frown and look serious."

"And does she love you?" asked Wat with surprise.

"Oh, yes! I am sure she does, because when I speak harshly she cries, and then I can't bear to see her cry, so we make it up again and are better friends than ever, until her spirits—you know what spirits she has got, Wat—get the better of her, then it is the same thing over again."

"She cannot love you," thought Wat, but did not speak a word; "it is impossible she can love you; no woman who really tenderly and sincerely loved a man would ever trifle with his feelings to indulge even a passion for coquetry."

Wat did not know much of the world!

"You see, Wat, how I was led into the error; I spoke as I should have fancied, had I been in your situation."

"I understand it well, Michael; say no more of it," returned Wat: and muttered, "Violet is not Flora, nor I Michael; I am a fool to doubt, where I feel satisfied all is beyond suspicion."

For some distance they went on in silence; angry clouds had been gathering up rapidly, and hurried in huge masses across the sky; they arose in such swift succession, and so densely, that it was not until a kind of preternatural darkness had taken place that the villagers noticed the approaching change in the weather; experience taught them that these indications betokened a sudden and fierce storm, and they quickened their pace, in order, if possible, to escape it; but in spite of their exertions, they were not more than half way to Brenchley when it burst with sudden and fearful fury; the wind swept with tremendous force by them, then came a flash of lightning, which seemed to set the whole forest in a blaze; it was followed by a peal of thunder that sounded like the roar of a hundred pieces of artillery, stunning the alarmed villagers with its deafening noise. When it had subsided, albeit the wind bellowed, and the trees bowed, crashingly keeping up a roar not much inferior to that which the thunder had produced, Wat, at the very top of his voice, shouted,

"Hasten, friends, hasten! this is only a taste of what is to come. Lose not a moment to get clear of the trees. Speed ye, speed for your lives." A terrific, vivid flash of lightning interrupted him, and appeared to play round them with a contiguity which made them feel as though they were in a hot atmosphere of flame; it was so closely followed by an awful peal of thunder, that everything was still visible in the lightning's light when the crash burst on their ears, resounding as if repeated by a thousand echoes.

"A thunderbolt! a thunderbolt!" cried several voices.

"Ay!" exclaimed Wat, using all the force of lungs the roar of the elements required to make himself heard. "On with ye all! Fly, fly! the next bolt that blasts some huge tree may send many of us to

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

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the other world at the same time if we linger here. On! on! follow me! I know every foot of ground now as well in the dark as in day light." As he concluded he darted forward, followed by his companions with as much speed as the darkness and intricacies of the way would allow.

"I pray heaven, Violet is safe in her father's house ere this storm burst," he cried to Michael, who still kept by his side.

"It is to be hoped so," he replied. "It was stated by your friend the 'Snake'—I believe that is the name he delights in—that she was saved by a youth on a war-horse. Now, if there is blood and speed in the steed, he should, ere this, providing the youth is faithful to his trust, be embosomed in her father's arms. Holy Mother protect us! What a flash!"

"And what a crash!" uttered Wat, as soon as he could make himself heard. "I am not apt to be alarmed at thunder and lightning, but I shall feel glad when I am out of the wood."

Michael echoed his sentiments, and then again they pursued their way swiftly, without remark; the storm still raging with the utmost fury, the lightning flashing vividly, ever and anon showing them their path, and then having the effect of making the darkness greater; they hurried on, as anxious now to get to Brenchley as they had been to reach Tonbridge; they crossed the branch of the stream already mentioned, and pushed direct for the village. They had not left it behind them above a hundred yards, when they heard a faint cry rise on the blast; it appeared to be but a short distance from them, and to rise from some spot in the direction they were pursuing. It was a cry of distress, a sound which failed not to interest the villagers at all times, and, rapidly as they were advancing, they quickened their steps to ascertain the cause, and, if possible, relieve the utterer from whatever danger he might be enduring. They had not progressed far when a flash of lightning showed them a man struggling in the grasp of three of the devils; Wat and his friends were upon them in an instant, and as instantaneously was the captive liberated, and the devils fled. Wat took the stranger by the hand to assure him of his safety, and felt him staggering and tottering; he had just time to stretch out his arms to support him as he fell almost senseless into them. Wat addressed several questions to him, but received nothing more than a few low moans in reply, and he now began to long for a flash of lightning, in order that he might ascertain if he could recognise whom he had saved, and to what extent he had suffered, that he should be thus senseless; one came, a broad, vivid sheet of flame, making everything as visible as if it were bright daylight. Wat looked eagerly upon him, for he knew that the brightness would last but for a moment, and in a voice in which horrified astonishment mingled quiveringly with its startling loudness, exclaimed—

"Holy Mother! it is Halbert Evesham, friends."

"Halbert Evesham!" repeated Michael and the villagers with one accord.

"Ay, it is he, and wounded seemingly to death. Michael, assist me in raising his feet from the ground. We must carry him in our arms gently to the village; he is too exhausted to walk, and we have no time to make a litter. Quick, quick. Will this storm never abate!"

"It seems to increase," cried Michael, assisting to lift Halbert. "Away with you, Wat; we can carry him between us as if he were an infant. How comes it, I wonder, that he is here, and in this state?"

"I suppose he learned, on his return to Brenchley, what had transpired respecting Violet," observed Wat in reply; "and entering the wood in quest, has been seized and treated thus by the bloodthirsty wretches from whose clutches we rescued him. How it lightens! never have I seen such a night!"

The flash which had produced the exclamation from Wat was one of an awful nature; it seemed as if a vast sheet of flame had enveloped them, coming hot, almost to scorching, upon them; it was succeeded by such a tremendous clap of thunder, that they actually stopped until it had in some measure ceased. Suddenly, Mark Grayling shouted, "The wood is on fire; fly, fly!"

A large tree in their rear was stricken by a thunderbolt, and the falling branches had taken fire. As yet not a drop of rain had fallen, but now it descended in torrents, a heavy fall of water pouring down in a flood. In a few minutes they were all drenched to the skin, without having an opportunity, or even desire, as they were situated, of sheltering themselves. It was well that they were perfectly acquainted with their way, for the darkness was more dense than ever. As they proceeded, using all the expedition they could, Wat found that they were not able to proceed so quickly or easily as he could wish, because of the manner of carrying Halbert; he therefore released Michael from his share of the burden, and lifting the old man upon his shoulders, hurried on with him at a speed which made what he bore appear of little or no weight. Soon the trees grew wider apart, more straggling, and then suddenly lights from the village burst on the eager eyes of the little band. They uttered a shout of joyous welcome, and a few minutes sufficed to bring them to the door of Halbert's residence. As they reached it the door flew open, and the villagers raised a loud cry of delight as they saw Violet rush out to meet them. Wat spoke a few hasty words of joy at seeing her, and entered the cottage, bearing his wounded burthen. Violet instantly recognised her foster-father in the form he carried, and shrieked with horror. She sprung to his side as Wat laid him upon a small couch which stood in the room, and cried—

"Almighty powers! what means this, Wat? Speak! My dear father wounded to death—murdered! Oh! Wat, Wat, who has done this?"

"Fear not, Violet," exclaimed Wat, soothingly, "he is not much hurt. We rescued him from the hands of some of the forest ruffians—he was in the state you now see him. He is wounded, but not fatally, I hope."

"You hope? Oh! Wat, that word seems to say that he will die! Do not say he will die. Father, dear father, look up—it is I, your Violet, who speaks—for my sake, dear father, look up."

As if her voice had some magic restorative in its tone, did Halbert's eyes open as she uttered her earnest words. He looked round him incoherently for a moment, then his eyes lighted on Violet; they rested a little while on her, and then a faint smile passed across his features; a low sigh broke from him, and he uttered, in a voice scarce audible,—

"Violet, my dear child, is it thou—is this no dream?"

"Dear, dear father, it is no dream," exclaimed the weeping girl; "I am safe and well—very well. Would that thou wert so, but thou art wounded; I pray the Holy Mother not dangerously."

"Be not alarmed, my dear child, the wound is slight. I am only weak from loss of blood—I shall be better in the morning. Now tender thy thanks to Wat, my dear child, for he saved me from the hands of brutal ruffians. The bright lightning showed me his face, although I had no strength then to acquaint

him that I knew in whose kind arms I was supported; but I felt secure; and though my senses, it seems, for a time left me, yet my memory is still faithful, and will be—for trust me, Wat, I shall not forget the obligation you have to-night laid me under."

"My very dear friend and brother, Wat," said Violet, gratefully taking both his hands with emotion. "Ever the same, my constant benefactor, for there is no day passes but I have to thank thee for some kindness done. How shall I utter acknowledgments of what thou hast done for me, when I can find no words expressive of what I feel or would say? Yet, if there are terms in existence which express more fully than any others the most sincere and grateful thanks, think, dear Wat, that I use them to thee. I know what thou hast been doing in my behalf, and I see what thou hast done for my father. Oh! Wat, if tears of gratitude could be thy best thanks, I would weep to thee—for indeed, indeed, I do feel most deeply all your kindness."

"Dear Violet," replied Wat, in a low husky voice, "there are no thanks to me due more than to any one here. As soon as each friend who surrounds you heard of your abduction, they joined with me heart and hand to rescue you; which, if we were not so fortunate to accomplish, yet it was not for the want of will: every one here equalled me in their exertions in your favour, and to them your thanks are due as much as to myself."

"Don't you believe all he says, Violet," exclaimed Michael; "you should have seen him—it would have gladdened your heart, I know, to see how energetic and active he was. He marshalled us all together in very little time, and led us off after you as cleverly as the best knight in the army could have done; and if you had seen him tackle Grif of the Bloody Hand, and throw him—the great brute!—as easily as he would cast an old cap from him, it would have made you dance with delight, as it did me and all of us—oh! it was glorious!—and then laid about the black dogs as if he was cutting down weeds; truly it was a pleasant sight to see how soon his exertions brought the rascals to a parley."

"I am grateful, most earnestly, most sincerely, to all," said Violet, as Michael concluded. "Believe me, dear friends, it is a matter of proud gratulation to me, that I should be thus kindly situated in your good opinion to induce you to act as you have done in my favour; and I feel the obligation as deeply and dearly as if you had rescued me, which I have no doubt you would have done if a good and gallant friend had not been nigh to save me and anticipate you. Oh! Wat, he did as you would, I know, have done—recovered me from the hands of brutal men, and brought me safely through the greatest dangers, this dreadful night, to my own sweet home again."

"And who is this good and gallant friend, dearest Violet," said Wat, "who, in restoring you safely, has done me this great kindness?"

"He is here, Wat; he awaited your arrival, to see one of whom I have had occasion to speak so kindly."

Wat Tyler looked round him, and saw, at a further corner of the room, Sir Walter Manny standing, regarding him with a steadfast and scrutinising gaze. As Violet concluded, the latter advanced to him, and tendered his hand to our hero, saying—

"I shall be glad to make thy friendship, Wat Tyler; a heart that prides itself upon fearing nothing living, and doing nothing to raise a blush in its possessor's face, will find out one of the same stamp at once when it gets in its company. Now, I think such an one is mine; that is to say, I have done my best to make it so, and I have heard enough of thee to be assured thine is kindred to mine—therefore do I desire thy friendship."

"Thou hast won it," uttered Wat, grasping the proffered hand. "I owe thee my best services for having saved Violet—they are yours whenever you choose to command them. I would rather have died than harm or wrong should have come to her, and to that extent am I bound to thee. I have now but to ask the name I shall always have to remember gratefully."

"The service I have done is not to be rated so highly as you appear to estimate it. My place in life makes it a duty for me to assist distressed and oppressed maidens; therefore, in delivering the gentle Violet from the defiling paws of the forest rogues, I did but my duty. In desiring your friendship, I seek only to be acquainted with a gallant heart, and not to enlist, by what I have done, services which I have no actual right at any time to call upon; so, good Wat Tyler, when you think of me remember not what has transpired, but that should a need arise, and I am near at hand, you will always find a friend to help you in Walter Manny."

"Sir Walter Manny!" ejaculated Wat, prefixing his knight's title, looking upon the "flower of chivalry" with some surprise.

"The same," replied Sir Walter, a little proudly, as he saw that Wat recognised the name as one already famous for noble and gallant deeds, and continued, "My name is not unknown to you?"

"Nor to any one who loves to hear of high and chivalrous daring," exclaimed Wat, with enthusiasm. "I have listened to your praises often, as often desired to meet you, and it is with no little pleasure that I now, under such extraordinary circumstances, find my hand grasped by thine, and hear thee offer thy friendship—a gift I shall be so proud to obtain."

"And one which thou hast," returned Sir Walter, pressing his hands; "though, marry! some men would feel more inclined in my situation to regard thee with hatred."

"Why?" demanded Wat, astonishedly.

"That thou shalt know anon," was the reply; "let it for the present suffice thee that I am not so unjust, and that I now advise thee to rid thyself of thy wet habiliments, and thy companions too had better follow thy example."

"I have been listening attentively," uttered Halbert, in a low voice, "and striving to master my weakness with the intent of catching your meaning respecting some danger which it appears Violet has endured, and from which she has been snatched by Sir Walter Manny—what does it all mean?"

"Seek not to know now, dear father," uttered Violet, approaching him, "you shall learn all in the morning, if you are better; I have much to ask of you, but I will stay my impatient curiosity until you can, without fatigue, relate to me the danger you have, as well as myself, this night incurred. Will you bear my father to his chamber, dear Wat, and then haste to thy home and seek repose after thy great exertions?"

"Your wish, Violet, is the law that governs me," answered Wat, with a smile; and, turning to his friends, said, "We have made a common cause to day in behalf of our sweet friend, and if she was not saved from the strait in which she was placed in the manner we expected, still she was saved, and I believe there is no one among ye who is not glad to see her by her own hearth again unharmed. Such thanks as you may deserve, in Halbert's and Violet's names, I render you, in my own the heartiest and best I can give; and I am sure, in your own hearts, you are as thankful for her safety as if some good and great obli-

gation was done you. You will, I am convinced, return—it may be weary and footsore—to your homes, with glad hearts that your object is gained; but let Mark Grayling's story of the manner in which Grif of the Bloody Hand rests under what he considers wrongs, be a lesson to you, that, when you retire to rest, you may have some weapons within reach, in case he should determine upon inflicting the horrors he committed at Wrotham, on Brenchley, and let us be prepared, to the best of our ability, to defeat such hellish intentions. You have seen to day that the devils are not invulnerable, and if we could beat them on their own ground, I see no reason why we should not defeat them on ours; and so, with many thanks, friends, good night."

"Good night, Wat Tyler," exclaimed Mark Grayling; "fear not that at least there will be one who will not sleep in the hour of attack, should they come upon us; one who, while he has strength to hold and wield a sword, will not flinch, but pay the debt he owes them to the very fullest extent."

The villagers bade Violet, Halbert, and Wat good night, and departed with light hearts to their homes, bearing in mind the necessity for watchfulness which Wat had impressed upon them. Michael remained to assist Wat in bearing Halbert to his chamber and dress his wounds, the ability to do which had been given him by Halbert, who was well skilled in such simple acts of surgery; while Sir Walter Manny, professing to be anxious respecting his horse Tricksy, which he had placed temporarily in a shed attached to Halbert's dwelling, prepared to depart. Wat directed him to his father's dwelling, assuring him that he would there meet with refreshment and bed for himself, and food and a stable for his horse. He accepted the proffer, and taking a kind farewell of all, especially Violet, which Michael noticed with suspicious eyes, he departed. Immediately afterwards Halbert was borne to his chamber, his wound dressed carefully by Wat, who found it was only a flesh wound, though a severe one, and he soon fell into a deep slumber. When they descended to the ground floor again, they found Violet seated with her hands clasped, looking deep in thought, and weeping. Wat started as he saw the tears chasing each other down her white cheeks, and in a tender voice asked—

"What ails thee, Violet—why art thou weeping?"

She sprung from her seat and hastily brushed her tears away: she essayed a smile, but it seemed rather a mournful one, as she replied—

"I hardly know why, Wat, but that I feel low and sad; my heart is very heavy, and I scarcely know wherefore—perhaps it is because I have been so terrified to-day, and—and my father's danger—I know not—but indeed I am very dull—very, very low-spirited." She burst into a fresh fit of tears, and leaned her head upon Wat's shoulder, as if she had lost the power of supporting herself.

"Cheer thee, sweet Violet," exclaimed Wat, soothingly; "thou hast been over-exerted—thou art unaccustomed to the stretch of mind such scenes as thou hast passed through to-day demands, and now the excitement has passed away, you naturally feel very low. Retire to thy couch—a night's sweet sleep will restore thee to thy usual spirits; thy father is in no danger, and rest assured thou art safe, and may sleep in peace and security."

"Where thou art I know I may, Wat," replied Violet, endeavouring to check her tears. "I will to rest, and hope in the morning to greet thee with smiles, instead of such sad looks as now I bear."

"May the sweetest slumbers be thine!" fervently uttered Wat.

"Amen!" uttered Michael, in a very audible voice, and in a very earnest manner, sufficient to induce Violet to turn towards him and smile faintly.

"Ah! Michael," she uttered, "I had almost forgotten thou wert here; you, too, have been very active in my service, I dare say one of the most active—was he not, Wat?"

"Ay, that was he. I am sure if you had been Flora, he could not have been more anxious for your welfare than he shewed himself to be when we were on your track."

"I believe it, and I shall not fail to remember your kindness with the utmost gratitude; and as some slight return, I will see if I cannot make Flora acknowledge that she thinks you the best hearted, kindest, dearest creature in the world."

Michael looked as if his breath was taken away by what Violet had said; and when he in some degree recovered himself, he said—

"Will you, will you? You have great influence over her—she loves you dearly; I wish she loved me only half as much; you only tell her she ought to love—no, that is, I mean, ask her, if she *does* love me, not to make me cross by laughing and joking with everybody as if *I* was nobody to be cared for; tell her it wounds my feelings—it pains me very much. Tell her this, and ask her not to continue it; she will listen to what you say, and do what you tell her, but she is very stubborn with me, and will have her own way in spite of everything, and so she might if her way did not sometimes lie through my heart, cutting it on both sides bitterly as she passes. If you will only tell her this, there is nothing in the world I will not do for you, or die attempting it."

"Whatever influence I have shall be exerted for thee, depend upon it, Michael," returned Violet; "I know Flora's heart well; she is very good and kind, and I am sure if she knew how her merry spirits pained you, she would not persist in them."

"Not, perhaps, if she loved me more," interrupted Michael, "but she does not love me enough to discontinue them when I wish her, because, when I do so, she frowns and pouts, and tells me I always check her spirits when she is merry, that she will not submit to my whims, and if I do not like them I may go to some other Flora, for what she cares, and that, Violet, is very hurtful to my feelings."

"But you, who are naturally lively, Michael, would not have her always staid and serious-looking, when you indulge your spirits, and give them frequent and unrestrained freedom," observed Violet.

"I am not so lively as I once was; my spirits, in spite of myself, are leaving me, and only on her account. I love her, Violet, dearer than my own life, and would not see her sad on any consideration; I complain not of her being merry, it is of her—flirting, if I must use the hateful word, with so many young men. I have no objection to her laughing and joking with them even—it is the *way* in which she does it I quarrel with; she makes herself cheap with them, they each think she is fond of them, and I, who am in a degree her acknowledged lover, am their laughing stock—the fool."

"Nay," interrupted Violet, "do not think so harshly."

"It is so," continued Michael, warmed into an earnest confession of his situation. "It is so with them—they consider me such; I don't believe she knows in what light her conduct places me, or she would not act so. I cannot explain exactly to her; I tried, but my tongue fails me, and I can only beg of her not to be so thoughtlessly lively, without being able to tell her why I wish her not. Now you can

enter fully into the subject with her, where I could not utter a word; I do not wish she should know that what you may say emanates indirectly from me, but merely say you have observed it, and such as I really feel you are sure must be the result of her behaviour if she persists in it. She is sure to pay the greatest attention to what you say, for you are everything to her; she has frequently told me how much she loves you, and if you were to appear a little offended if she does not act as you recommend, it would have a very good effect; I am sure she would alter instantly, if it was only to be friends again with you. If you will do me this kindness it will repay tenfold what I may have done, and all I can do to serve you."

"What I can do in the way of persuasion, rest assured I will, Michael; I believe that she is fond of me, and such influence as I possess shall be employed for thee."

"A thousand thanks, Violet; you need have no doubt about her being fond of you; if you had seen her to-day when she learned that you had been carried off, it would have satisfied you at once—she wept and wrung her hands, and did nothing but urge me to follow you, and if I loved her, die rather than you should suffer harm."

"I am satisfied that she loves me; when I reached her I met her wandering about the house like a spirit, and when she saw me she clung about my neck, weeping as if her heart would break for joy."

"To be sure she would," uttered Michael, the water rushing into his eyes as he spoke.

"Ay, and after that, she inquired for thee; wondered why I had not seen thee; conjectured every variety of circumstance that could by any possibility have befallen thee, until she had exhausted her imagination, and said enough to have convinced any one who had not known otherwise, that Michael had alone gone to the wood in search of me. Michael alone was to attack the terrible robbers; none but Michael could overtake me, and none but Michael could bring me back; in fact, that Michael was the most generous, manly, brave, best being in the world."

"And she said that?" said Michael, with beaming eye.

"She did," replied Violet.

"Now, Heaven bless thee! for that kind intelligence," exclaimed Michael; "I shall sleep lighter and wake more happily for that news. I know thou wouldst not deceive me—that it is true, and she would not say as much when I was away, if she did not feel it; and so I will retire to my bed with that balm to my heart, and for the future try and think that when she does any little thing which I may not like, it is but her spirits, and not that she cares little for me, which induces her to do it."

A low tap at the door was at this moment given, and Wat Tyler advanced and opened it. He uttered an exclamation of surprise, and said—

"How strange! We were just talking of you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed a young girl, with a slight laugh, whom he addressed, and who entered at the same moment. "I hope you spoke well of me, because here I am to inflict deadly vengeance upon those who have said aught against me. I think, by-the-bye, Wat, that you are very rude to tell me you were just talking of me, for you might be sure the old proverb would pop into my head; and, whatever you may think of me, I fancy I have none of the imp about me. Oh, friend Michael, there you are! I came to look for you, sir. I hope you don't pride yourself upon possessing any feeling; if you did, you would not have stopped here, but flew to those who were waiting your return so anxiously. No, I shall not give you my hand. Don't imagine that I was anxious in the least about you—not the slightest. No! it was your poor mother, who is so very uneasy about you; and yet here you stand, quite unconcerned, as if you had left home five minutes since, and had been in no danger whatever."

"Give me your hand, Flora, will you not?" said Michael, appealingly.

"Are you wounded or hurt?" asked Flora, hesitatingly, striving to conceal the interest she really felt.

"Not a scratch of any sort. I am as well as ever, though I have had hotter work to do than ever I had before," replied Michael.

"Then I do not see the slightest necessity to give you my hand. If you had been well battered and bruised, I might have proffered it, just as nature would dictate me to do to any poor cripple; but as you are well, and have all your limbs in good order, I shall withhold it for the present. Nay, never look so grim; I think it is I who ought to look even ferocious."

"Look ferocious! Why?" asked Michael.

"Am I to repeat that I have been hunting for you this last hour? I called at your mother's—by accident, understand—not to see if you had come home, and found her very uncomfortable about you; and so, to ease her mind, I consented to come in search of her graceless son. To every place have I been in the village where I thought it likely to meet you, but without success; and here I find you gossiping as if there was no such person as your mother in the world—or—or any one else."

"Flora, for instance," suggested Wat.

"Oh, dear no; it is a matter of indifference to me whether he thought about me. If he thought as little of me as I of him, he might have stopped and been swallowed by a wolf, without fearing I should be affected in any way."

"How can you say so, Flora?" exclaimed Violet. "Did you not talk of him, and nothing but him, when here scarce an hour since? You had not seen his mother then."

"Very true," said Flora, laughingly, and looking askance at Michael, to see what effect her words would have. "I spoke of him, because there was such a fine, noble-looking handsome young man here, and I must have something to say, or he would not have looked at me, which I wanted him to do very much; because when he saw me he might fall in love with me, and only think how delightful it would be to have such a beautiful and gallant-looking youth in love with you. So I talked of Michael, because at the moment nothing better came into my head."

Wat Tyler, who was looking from one to the other, with a smile upon his countenance, observed Violet's face and neck suffused with crimson, and then change to a deadly pale: a sensation as if a sword had been thrust in his heart crossed him the moment he observed it, and the thought of what Michael had suggested to him in the wood respecting Walter Manny, passed like lightning through his mind; he felt sick and faint for a moment, but by a strong effort mastered the feeling, and affected to look on with smiling unconcern. Poor Michael exhibited no change, save a slight trembling of the upper lip, and in as calm a voice as he could assume, said to Flora,

"And did he look at you?"

"Um! Not quite so much as I desired. You see, I had very little chance where Violet was; he seemed only to have eyes for her, and words for her. It is true he laughed, and said a word or so to me; but he was so much taken up with her, that if an angel had been here, I don't think he would have conde-

scended her a look; however, I do not despair. I will try my very best next time I see him. In truth, I hoped to meet him now, and that is one reason why I came here. I wonder where he is flown. Violet, where have you hidden your new lover?"

Again Violet's face and neck were scarlet, and again Wat felt the pang shoot through him, for he could not but see her confusion; fortunately her embarrassment was unnoticed by Flora or Michael, and the latter spared her from the necessity of replying by saying,

"I know where he is, Flora; and if you particularly wish to see him, I will lead you to the place of his present abode; it ought to make no difference to me now to whom or where you go, since I am an object of the greatest indifference to you, and which you fully bear out, by telling me as much on my return from an affair in which, at least, there was some danger; and so, much as it pains me, I will try and think differently to what I have done. If you are about returning to your home, Flora, I will see you there—for the last time, if you wish it to be so: or if my company be as distasteful as I am indifferent to you, why, Wat will see you home."

Flora looked steadfastly at him, and saw that he spoke seriously and as he felt; she was annoyed with herself for having evidently wounded his feelings without having received the least cause for doing so; a change came suddenly over her pretty features, the tears sprung into her eyes, and she held out both her hands to him, as she said—

"Michael, I am glad to see you back unharmed, and free from all danger; indeed I am, and I meant so all along, only I am fond of teazing, you know, and do not always say what I mean; but bear with me, I did not intend to hurt your feelings, and if I have, I am very sorry for it."

"Say no more, dear Flora," cried Michael, changing quickly from sadness to delight, and seizing both her extended hands with avidity. "I am too ready to take all you say seriously to heart, but I'll try and break myself of it for your sake."

"That's a dear good Michael; and so now we are the very best friends, perhaps you will see me home; there will be a rare scolding for being out so late, but never mind that, as you are not coming with me for the last time."

"I hope not, by many thousands," ejaculated Michael.

"Good night, dear Violet," said Flora, kissing her affectionately. "Don't you pet Wat so much, take my advice, or else he will be quite spoiled. Good bye, Wat, don't impose upon good nature, or else some fine, handsome, gallant youth may come and cut you out. Good bye, God bless you both." As she concluded, she ran laughing away, followed by Michael, who uttered a hearty good night; and, judging from the rapid sound of his footsteps, there was little doubt but Flora was giving him a chase.

"You are wearied and fatigued, dear Wat," said Violet, when the sound of Michael's footsteps had died away. "Pray retire to your home and rest. You have undergone sufficient to-day to have worn any one to death; you must need repose much; do not tarry here to add to the fatigue which you have already endured."

"Be not concerned for me, Violet," returned Wat. "In your service I feel neither fatigue nor weariness; but I am satisfied your powers have to-day been overtaxed, and need quiet and rest far more than mine do; so, sweet Violet, for my sake, if not your own, retire to your couch, and I will sit me down by thy father's side and watch till morning."

"It is a task, Wat, I have myself intended to perform," returned Violet. "Believe me, I am not so unmindful of what thou hast already done, nor so ungrateful for the kind service as to wish thee still further to increase thy fatigue, and our obligation, by robbing thee of thy much required-night's repose. Let me have my way in this, dear Wat. Return to thy home, and in the morning, when thou'rt well rested, none will be happier than I to see thee."

"I am not used, Violet, to thwart thee in thy wishes—I am ever too glad to gratify them as soon as formed; but now, pardon me, I must. Fear not for me, Violet; young as I am, nature has gifted me with a frame which I know to be capable of enduring fatigue to thrice the extent of that I have borne to-day, and a mind whose energies will, I feel, rise superior to my bodily weakness whenever occasion demands it. If I were to obey you and return to my home, I should not sleep; in all probability come back to watch beneath thy window; therefore, let me for once have my way, and I promise you I will not soon again thwart you."

"Be it as you will, Wat," said Violet, turning away to conceal tears which thronged in her eyes. "Thou'rt ever thoughtful, considerate, and affectionate in everything wherein I am concerned. I would to Heaven thou wert less kind—more selfish—anything but what thou art, or I had never—never seen—"

"What?——Who?" asked Wat, after waiting a pause, occasioned by sobs choking Violet's utterance. He received no answer, and then he repeated his question in a low, sad tone, as if he feared to hear the reply. When Violet could command herself so far as to articulate, she answered—

"Do not ask me now, I scarce know what I am saying. Strange things are flitting through my brain. Sleep will chase them all away. You shall not be troubled by any of this foolish weakness in the morning. And should my father be better, you will find me merry and light-hearted, and the same as of old—to thee dear Wat, the same as ever. Good night. God bless and keep thee. I will pray for thy happiness earnestly, that thou mayest never know pain or grief, or—no matter. Good night, my good, my constant friend."

"Good night, sweet Violet; may angels of joy and light hover round thy pillow, bringing thee sweet dreams in thy gentle restful slumber; and if thou dost remember me in thy prayers, I fear not that I shall enjoy all thou dost wish me, for I am sure they will be heard if ever the prayers of the innocent and good are listened to on the throne of Grace. And so, good night: and let me in the morning see thee smiling and happy as when, years ago, we laughed and played, and knew not what grief meant. The Holy Mother shed her gentle influence over thee! Good night, dear Violet, good night!"

Violet pressed his hand warmly, but spoke not; her heart was full, and she slowly retired to her couch to weep the night away; while Wat, with a sad and troubled mind, sought with stealthy footsteps the bedside of Halbert, and, when there, sat him down to ponder upon matters which, if they proved to be as he surmised, would go nigh to break his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

"The wearied mind straight from the heart departeth,
To rest within his worldly paradise,
And bitter finds the sweet under his guise.
What webs there he hath wrought, well he perceiveth:
Whereby then with himself on love he plaineth,
That spurs with fire, and bridleth eke with ice.
In such extremity thus is he brought:
Frozen now cold, and now he stands in flame,
'Twixt woe and wealth, betwixt earnest and game,
With seldom glad, and many a diverse thought,
In sore repentance of his hardiness.
Of such a root; lo, cometh fruit fruitless."

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

"We were as twinn'd lambs, that did frisk i' the sun,
And bleat the one at the other; what we chang'd
Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
The doctrine of ill doing—no, nor dream'd
That any did."

SHAKSPERE.

UPON the ground, with his face buried in his hands, and his head resting upon his knees, sat Wat Tyler. Thoughts were thronging through his brain, scorching and burning as if they were composed of fire. Occasionally his fingers would compress, and a quiver pervade his whole frame, else he moved not save once or twice, when he rose from the ground and opened the lattice, to let the cool night air play on his hot brow, but it was only for a moment, and he returned again to his old position. That his thoughts were full of agony, none who could have gazed upon him in that lone hour would have entertained one doubt. Had they known the cause, they might also have guessed, to one young as he, enthusiastic, high in hope, possessing the proudest, brightest anticipations for the future, how terrible was that agony, nor needed to be further satisfied, to hear him mutter in tones of bitterest anguish—

"She loves another—she loves not me; she loves another—not me, not me; I, too, who have so—so idolised her. God help me! all is over!"

There was not a calamity which it might be the fate of man to endure which could have affected Wat Tyler as the conclusion he came to respecting Violet's heart being given to another had done. He possessed a strong, but very imaginative mind; his nature was kind and affectionate, possessing all the attributes which ennoble man; he was invested with a high enthusiasm, which pervaded all his impressions and his acts; he was earnest and devoted as a friend; a worshipper, without being abject, where he loved. Let it not be supposed that his youth precluded him from being what he is here characterised, for the reader has not to learn that the caprice of nature will make youth of both sexes appear men and women at seventeen, and, in other cases, leaves them little else than boys and girls at three or four-and-twenty. Wat Tyler, though but seventeen, had been led by Halbert Evesham to think and act as a man. He was gifted with an energy of mind which enabled him to do so, and a frame that materially assisted him in carrying out all it might resolve. The first powerful impression on the mind of youth is love! Let those who will, smile at the idea—they cannot deny, not only that it is so, but that it is *the most* powerful: it comes very early, at a time when there is little prospect of the fond wishes it creates being realised, and hence are we so much struck by the truth of Shakspere's lines—

"For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth."

It is not that love does not really possess the same chance of smoothness in its course as other circumstances of life, but that it arises at an age when the probabilities are, any favourite scheme conceived at the same time would have no great chance of arriving unobstructedly to a fortunate termination; There are exceptions, it is true, but they only prove the truth of the principle; there is too much imagination, too little reality. Who is he, who, possessing a warm, fervid imagination, having been at the age of seventeen thrown much into the society of a maiden exceedingly beautiful, did not fall in love with intense enthusiasm, absorbing everything else, making every other circumstance—even the future prospects of life—of far inferior importance? And if, after he had been led to believe the heart he coveted to be wholly and solely his, he found himself mistaken by discovering it was given to another, did he not feel as if the whole of life—all it might or did contain—was one blank? there could never, for him, be one position in which he could be placed to yield him joy or happiness. How many hearts who are now old can respond affirmatively to this? How many, whose once shining locks were their own or other's pride, but are now grey and thin where they were profuse, can look back to their days of youth, and sigh as they say, such was my case? Yet there are many who have suffered this—who, had they seen Wat with his manly face buried in his hands, and the large tears trickling between his fingers, would have shrugged their shoulders and cried—"Oh! the weak-mindedness of youth!"

Poor fellow! he had built his palace on a sandy foundation; and, even while he deemed it standing proudly in its beauty and pride, he beheld it sinking and sinking, and heard a voice, which seemed to stun him, shout in his ears—"It perishes for ever!"

It is true that Violet having surrendered her heart to Sir Walter Manny was as yet but a speculation, and he tried to think it one for which there was no foundation. But why did she blush so violently when Flora had mentioned him? Twice had she done so; and this, coupled with the warm praises she had bestowed upon him before he had done her this recent service, seemed a staunch assurance that she looked on him with no indifferent eyes. His person, too, was such that any woman might look on it and love ere she knew the qualities of his mind; and when that was united to all that was noble, brave, and chivalrous, it was scarce to be wondered that the heart of one simple as Violet should be unshaken, when her life—or what was more dear, her honour—had been saved by him. Wat revolved all this in his mind, and, after many hard and bitter struggles, he came to the conclusion of saving Violet pain, and himself the horrors of doubt, by taking the first opportunity to draw from her the truth. His mind grew calmer when he resolved on this; and, changing his position, he knelt down to pray, that in all things, under all circumstances, Violet might be happy; then he arose, and leaned over the old man, who was slumbering placidly, and he smiled as he saw there was colour returning to the pale cheeks, for he knew that Violet would be gladdened to learn her foster-father's danger was leaving him. He walked softly to the window, opened it, and looked forth. The storm, which had abated when they arrived at the cottage, had quite passed away; the sky was cloudless; the moon was near the full, and shone brilliantly, making everything almost as visible as if 'twere day. The wind had died away with the clouds, and all things were still and calm, and hushed in quiet repose, as most of the wearied villagers were at that moment. No sound met his ear, not the rustle of a leaf, although trees stood

within a few feet of him. As he gazed on the sweet scene, his thoughts insensibly reverted to times when he and Violet had together wandered to all the beautiful places around—had been all in all to each other, no doubt ever crossing him then that she did not love him.

Deep as he was in thought, it suddenly struck him he saw a human figure glide among a clump of trees close to the cottage. He roused himself from his abstraction and watched earnestly for some time, but without succeeding in discovering any one. He had just arrived at the conclusion that he was mistaken, when either that figure or another glided from the trees and stood in the shadow which the cottage made in the broad moonlight. He had no doubt this time, and called out—but not loudly, for fear of disturbing Violet or Halbert—to the stranger. He received no answer. He repeated his call several times, but with the like success; determining to be satisfied, he closed the window, and seeing that Halbert remained undisturbed, glided noiselessly down the stairs, seized his spear, which he easily found, and cautiously stole round to the spot to where the mysterious stranger had glided; but although he searched all around in every place he could suppose him to find concealment, he failed to discover any one.

His ill-success was not for want of sufficient scrutiny, for he routed every spot, but in vain; and wondering what it could mean, and resolving to be on his guard, he entered the cottage, and, fastening the door well, stole silently up towards Halbert's room. As he passed the door of Violet's chamber, he stopped to breathe a prayer for her; it was an impulse he could not—nor did he seek—to resist; and while he stood there, a low sob broke on his ear—it was Violet's—he knew the tone. It smote his heart like an ice-bolt; he held his breath, for he heard her low weeping voice in prayer; he crossed himself, and remained immoveable. He caught little that she uttered, until seemingly a sudden burst of anguish induced her to exclaim more loudly—

"Oh, Holy Mother! counsel and assist me in this strait; teach me so to act that I may not be wickedly ungrateful, or wring the heart of one who has ever sacrificed all personal feelings, all his own wishes, thoughts, pleasures, joys, for me, who, from childhood to this hour, has been kind, and good, and gentle, never giving me sorrow or pain, but bearing all himself rather than I should suffer ill or harm. Oh, blessed Mother, save me from—"

Here the voice became inaudible from sobs; he waited for no more, but with a sickened, heavy heart, returned to the bedside of Halbert. He easily guessed the object of her prayer, and it strengthened him in the resolve upon which he had previously determined. He strove to drive away the pain of thought by directing his attentions to his sleeping charge, and to the spot where he had seen the figure glide; he found the breathings of Halbert gentle, calm, and regular, and when he turned from contemplating him to look abroad, nothing met his eye but the still moonlit landscape. All that long night—so long it seemed as if it would never pass away—did he watch sadly, but unrepiningly; and when the first faint flush of morning dawned, chasing away with its rosy tint the cold gray hue of the night, he was roused from a deep fit of musing into which he had unconsciously fallen, by the low cautious step of Violet, who entered the chamber gently, and, in a whispering voice, asked the state of her foster-father.

"He sleeps still," replied Wat in the same tone; "*his slumber* has been placid and undisturbed; he will not, I think, awaken until the sun is high, and then, save a slight weakness from loss of blood, will be as well as ever."

"Bless thee for saying so, Wat; and now grant my request—retire to rest, and leave me here to watch and pray by my father's side; I need no further repose; thy nature must be exhausted, howsoe'er thy kind will would counsel thee to deny it; tarry not for my sake, if thou wilt not for thine own; away to thy couch, and refresh thy over-wearied frame."

"He still sleeps calmly," muttered Wat, looking at Halbert, without making any reply to Violet's request: "he is in no danger, and may be left for a time without fear;" then taking Violet by the hand, said, "Dear Violet, a word with you," he led her from the room into the apartment below; the first beams of the morning sun were throwing their faint gleams upon the household things as they entered; all was still and silent as the night, for the world was not yet awake. Wat looked upon Violet's face as they reached the centre of the room, and saw that it was pale, indicating that she had passed the night sleeplessly, and her eyelids were red and swollen, telling that it had also been spent weepingly.

"You have rested ill, dear Violet," he said in a kind tone; "I should perhaps say, you have not rested at all, but have wept the night away. Why is this sadness, dear Violet? it cannot arise from fear of Halbert's state, for he is free from danger, nor from what thou did'st yesterday endure, for thou art safe and surrounded by those who will die rather than suffer a like danger to occur again to thee. Why is this sorrow—will you not tell me, Violet? thou knowest there is no evil which may befall thee that, if I can grapple with, but I would root out. Fear to hide nothing from me, nor feel offended that I seek it of thee; for have we not from children poured out the feelings of our hearts to each other, secreting nothing? and I know of nothing, even now, which should keep aught hidden from the other. Speak, dear Violet, and relieve my mind from a suspense which pains to an extent you can scarce imagine; I have strange and heavy forebodings that weigh on my spirits terribly, and ere I leave thee now, I would have them confirmed or cleared away."

Violet turned her head away and covered it with her hand; she wept, but said nothing. Wat waited a minute; having no reply, he proceeded—

"Violet, when first your foster-father brought you to this village, now nearly fourteen years since, he took up his abode in my foster-father's house; I was then a child, who had been on my feet scarce six months; we were as young—we were nursed in the same lap, fed by the same hand, raised our little hands in prayer together, slumbered side by side, played, laughed, and wept together, went forth hand in hand in the sunshine, or found a thousand ways of amusing each other when the rain came down and kept us from strolling among the leaves and flowers. We never uttered a cross word, but were ever striving to show how much we loved one another, and this went on until your father took this house; but though we lived not beneath the same roof, we did not change—I was a boy of five years old when you came to this dwelling; but young as I was, I was old enough to know I loved you, Violet, better than all earthly things, and wept when I laid down that night alone, for fear that our first parting might lead to one for ever. That thought has clung to me like an evil spirit from then until now; still, as year followed year, and we grew older and wiser, and seemed to have our love increase with our growth, I chased it

from my mind, but at every little event producing aught of pain or ill to thee, it would return with as great power as ever; the events of yesterday brought strange fancies which have arisen from those words, together with your extraordinary, and, to me, most painful sadness, have determined me in speaking to

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

it back with greater force than ever I felt it before—it now hangs on my heart with a weight I can scarcely support; some words you dropped me you as I have never done before. Dear, dear Violet, I may never have rds, but I have striven hard by at I loved you

dearer—oh, how weakly words express thoughts!—dearer, Violet, than all I have been taught to hold most dear. How can I tell thee that the joys and delights of life, all the pleasures which human nature can enjoy, all that I have heard or dreamed of that was desirable to produce perfect happiness, was identified in my thoughts with thee? I could see nothing which might be beautiful or good which was not vested in thee: in truth, Violet, I have ever, and now more than ever, love you with heart and soul, with the most intense and earnest affectionateness of which human nature is capable. Do not tremble and weep so, my own dear Violet; if I thought my words were paining thee, I would cut my tongue from my mouth for having uttered them; yet I think not what I have said can hurt thee, unless—oh, God—I must go on—I must know all—the best or worst—the suspense is worse than death. Violet, wilt thou tell me if my love hath found a response in thy gentle breast? answer me truly, dearest, without remembrance of what has passed between us—answer, without fear or disguise, for my love for thee is great enough to spurn the thought, that, for the sake of sparing my feelings, thou shouldest sacrifice thine own happiness—answer as if you were laying bare your heart to your Maker. Violet, dost thou love me?"

He waited some little time for an answer. Violet sobbed dreadfully, but made great efforts to utter a reply; at length, in a voice so low that he was compelled to bend over her to catch the words, she said—

"I do—I do, most dearly—indeed, most dearly—but—"

"Proceed, Violet; fear not!" ejaculated Wat, in the kindest tone he could assume, on finding her hesitate.

"But—but—" the words seemed to choke her, and again Wat besought her to proceed, using sentiments as were best calculated to draw the remainder from her.

"You pain me more, Violet, by this grief and hesitation, than all you can say," he exclaimed; for I cannot but believe I am inflicting anguish upon you, which, Heaven is my judge, I would rather perish an hundred times over than be guilty of. Speak, then, and fear not."

After several severe struggles to assume a calmness, Violet parted her hair from her forehead, over which it strayed, and looked in Wat's face: he was gazing upon her with a look so full of kindness and earnest sympathy, that she drooped her head again, as if about to confess some crime, and faltered forth—

"I do, Wat, love you most sincerely, most affectionately, but it is—as a beloved brother."

He grew pale as ashes—a strong quiver ran through his frame—he shook in every joint—it was as if he had been suddenly withered—and he echoed, almost mechanically—"As a brother?"

"As a best-beloved, faithful, unceasingly-kind, dear—dear brother," she uttered, earnestly; but still not trusting herself to look in his face, till she felt the strong convulsion of his frame by the trembling hand which still held hers, and then she looked up, and saw his head turned away, and his eyes covered by his hand, while his chest heaved and fell, showing the strong workings of agony her words had caused. She gazed for a moment, and felt cold and faint, and she knew her words had almost crushed the heart of one, the study of whose life had been to keep her from suffering the remotest degree of pain; she fell upon her knees, and buried her weeping face upon his hand, which she still clasped, now convulsively—

"Forgive me, dear Wat, forgive me," she cried, in throes of bitterest anguish. "I have inflicted on thee, I can see too well, an agony thou would'st have died rather than have made me suffer. Oh, shame upon me! to forget how constant have been thy endeavours to bring me all happiness—to banish from my path all ill—to risk health, strength, life, and peace of mind for one who hath made no return for all thou hast done. I feel I have wronged thee—wickedly wronged thee, that I am ungrateful to you, to whom I should be all gratitude. Oh, dear Wat, pardon me; forgive me for wounding thy feelings thus. I will be to thee all thou canst wish; I will endeavour to make thee forget my unkindness by my future love. Indeed, indeed, I would not hurt thee thus; I feared to do it; believe me, Wat, I feared to say those words, but you charged me—"

"Say no more, sweet Violet," interrupted Wat, speaking in low husky tones, withdrawing his hand from his features, and raising the sobbing girl from her kneeling posture. "Say no more, dear *sister*, for so thou shalt be to me now and henceforth. Forgive thee for what thou hast said, Violet? thou needest no forgiveness of me—rather yield it to me for my presumption in asking thy heart—the heart of one so immeasurably above me as thou art. I should have known that I was unfitted to thee—that thou wert for my worship, not for my mating—the household deity, before whose shrine I should bend and not seek to ally myself with. What should that which I have done weigh in the balance, when thou hast repaid all my little services tenfold by thy kind words and smiles—and fond looks? making me happier than all others, and as I shall never be again."

"Oh! Wat—and I the cause!" interrupted Violet, who was leaning her head upon his shoulder, weeping as though she would not be comforted.

"Nay, I meant not that, believe me, in reference to thee; the happiness of childhood is without alloy, as mine was; that of maturer age bears always some pain with it. If we have been as brother and sister, and—and—we have, let us continue so; it is all I ask. I will stifle the mad—unreasonable hope, for that it is most presumptuous in me to look for. Let me but be what I have ever been, and I shall be happy; the careful, watchful, earnest, affectionate friend and brother, to a dearly beloved sister."

"Oh, Wat, your kindness will break my heart," murmured Violet, almost inaudibly.

"Nay, Violet, believe rather my heart bleeds to see thee weep thus; chase away those tears, and smile—all will be well, be assured. We may yet walk hand-in-hand, as of old, in the sunshine, among the flowers and grass—I to thee as a brother, and thou my beloved sister. Look up and smile, dear Violet, nor think that thy words have wrung me; if I have raised a building on a weak foundation, ought I to quarrel with the wind that razes it to the ground? No; rather let me lament my own folly; if I felt pained and agonised—it would be wrong in me to deny that I did not, and do now—it was not that *thou* hadst spoken words which crushed my hopes for ever, but at the overthrow of a wish, great and absorbing as it was, which I had no right to entertain. Do not, I implore thee, Violet, task yourself with ingratitude; thou hast done me a great kindness; for I would ten thousand times rather suffer the pangs of unrequited love than thou shouldest have given up thyself to utter misery, by confessing a love for me when thy heart was another's. Start not, Violet, it is so; and if I had afterwards discovered that thy gentle heart was sacrificed to save me from pain, however great, it would have stung me deeper than if thou wert now to say thou hatest me, which I am sure thou wilt not."

"Oh no—no."

"And as I know the true light to view myself in with thee, even as thy brother, let me as a brother counsel thee. I do not seek impertinently to gain thy confidence, but to advise thee of what I know. It seemeth plain to me now, Violet, that thy heart is Sir Walter Manny's—you answer not, and I am right. I will not disguise from thee that an accident made me discover it no later than yesternight; still, as it was a doubt, and I—I—but no more of that, that surmise was the cause of my now unfolding my feelings to thee; and, as of all youths thou hast met, he surpasseth them in the graces which ennoble human nature, to him alone could'st thou have given thy heart. Well—nay, never shrink, Violet, the world hath noted him for a brave and chivalrous knight, of high family. I have seen that his person is handsome, and his bearing noble, even one that a woman might never need blush to own that she loved, and cannot but acknowledge him far worthier of you than the humble Wat Tyler."

"Not worthier, Wat," uttered Violet, warmly.

"Not honester—nor prouder of having done nothing to be ashamed of, I believe, Violet; but personally, and in position, worthier than I of such an one as thee: all this I acknowledge, nor wonder that thou shouldest love him—but thou hast not known him long; thou art, in knowledge of the world's ways, but a simple village maiden, and he one used to courts, to their heartless practices, to their wickedness, and, from long association with them, too likely to be tinctured with some of their immorality. I should feel a satisfaction in knowing, Violet, if he has used any covert means to gain thy love, or gives thee any reason to believe he would not be proud to make thee his bright and peerless lady. I ask thee as a brother should ask a sister, only with the intent of saving her from a wrong to which her own guilelessness might make her fall a victim."

"What shall I say to thee, Wat, than whom no brother was e'er so good and kind? I feel as if ashamed to tell thee of my weakness—weakness that looks so like ingratitude, yet is not. When first I met Walter at Lamberhurst, he acted as you would have done, seeking my pleasure in all things, yet he never told me he loved me, nor asked me to love him. I should be wrong to say that he was more than respectful—very, very kind and attentive; that he risked his life yesterday for me, as if it were something to be lightly thrown away; yet he has not said a word since we escaped in that dreadful storm, to make me think he rated his services higher than the satisfaction it gave him to do me a kindness. This is all: I believe him to be all that is generous and noble, and that he would rather die than do me wrong."

"I am glad to hear thee say so," said Wat; "but, nevertheless, would have thee be not too credulous until you may know him better; in saying this, you will acquit me of other motives than thy good, for thou hast known me very long, Violet—hast known my every thought and act, and art assured that even for so great a good as thy fair hand and heart I would not barter my truth and honour; and therefore would have thee think it is nothing but the desire for thy future happiness that makes me say, though thou dost love him, be not too certain that he is all that thou could'st wish—but more of this anon. Thy night has been a sad one; the want of rest and peace is exhibited in thy pale face and swollen eyes. Return to thy couch and sleep undisturbedly and happily. Withdraw from your mind all thoughts of having caused me pain; this explanation has been and is better for us both; I have been brought to my level, and feel, even now, proud and happy that I may call thee sister, as thou art and ever will be to my heart; and I will be to thee ever, in danger and strait, in sickness, health, safety, or sorrow, a loving brother. To thy couch, Violet, for my sake, and lay thee down with a placid mind, that thou mayest awake cheerfully; and look the same bright and beautiful being you ever were"

"My noble, generous friend, dear brother of my heart, thy disinterested wishes for my happiness shames my own selfishness, and I feel as if I stood before thee a living example of the extent to which ungratefulness may be carried."

"I will not hear thee speak thus," interrupted Wat.

"Nay, I feel thus, and would have thee know I do; but thou mayest yet learn, Wat—if thou art not already acquainted with it—that a stream may be diverted for a time from its channel, but when it returns to its old course, it will flow on with greater strength than ever. You have told me that I love Sir Walter Manny, have assumed and acted upon it as a certainty, because you have seen me weep, and appear low-spirited: if I do not deny your assumption, I do *not* acknowledge it. I have many causes for tears besides the one to which you attribute my ruth. You know little of my history—even as do I. Have I not cause for sadness in remembering the situation of incertitude in which I am placed respecting my parents? All that I can gather from the determined silence of my foster-father is, that I was placed an infant in his charge by unseen hands; but that some day I may know who gave me birth, and why I was subjected to this mysterious treatment. You, who have never known the want of parents, cannot enter into my feelings, my speculations, doubts, hopes, and wishes. You cannot know the dreary want of a mother's cherishing love—and I earnestly hope never may. Oh! Wat, it is a source of pain and grief to me to be as I am—motherless; to be without that loved being whose kindness endureth for ever—the one to whom we may cling in all the tempests and dangers to which life is subject, and be assured of assistance and protection—the one who, through the wayward, fretful hours of childhood, nourishes and cherishes with the tenderest care and affection, and ever without complaint; allaying the pains, the sufferings, the tears, and the peevishness with the same kind patient manner; never changing, but always ministering to the little wants, with fond and gentle acts; smiling the weepings of infancy into gladsome laughter, and implanting in the little breast, by the constant exertion of affectionate solicitude, the love which can never, but with life, fade. Oh! Wat, this I have never known—never known that which I could so well, so dearly appreciate; there is scarce an hour I do not feel the want, a night I do not pray to be restored to her; or a circumstance wherein I do not miss her advice. Is not this a cause for tears, a deep, a bitter one? And will you not now, Wat, think that I may have other motives for weeping besides the one you have challenged me with?—not but that I should weep as you have seen me, to place pain in thy breast, where I would plant all pleasure."

"I believe thee sincerely, sweet Violet," said Wat. "That you must suffer deeply the absence of a mother's gentle, untiring love, I can fully understand—I can judge by my own feelings, for I have felt how great a blessing it is to possess it, and the strength with which I return it teaches me the high estimation in which I hold it. What then should a female do, to whom a mother is all in all?—who most

needs counsel and advice, where none but a mother can guide and direct. The want is great; and though efforts have been made to supply its place, yet, however earnest they may be, they must necessarily fall far short of the acts arising from maternal love. I trust, Violet, the day will come, and that perhaps not far distant, when you will be folded in a mother's embrace; but, till then, let me be to thee as I have been—ever at thy side to serve thee, nor fear thou to call upon my aid or counsel when thou shalt need them: they are thine while life dwells in this heart. Hesitate not, dear Violet, at any time, on any occasion when thou shalt require them, nor hold thee back, doubting that I may seek in requital more than a sister's love."

"Wat—"

"As I speak, I mean, Violet; the vain dream is dispelled, and I look upon thee now as I did when we played together at my mother's knee—even as a beloved sister; one whom I am bound, by duty no less than love, to serve and protect in all things, and will, God willing, while I have power to act. Think of me as thy brother—thou hast said thou didst—and when in doubt or danger, say to thyself, 'my brother Wat will help me;' and where'er I may be, if thou dost not fail to acquaint me with my strait, I will to thy side to serve thee with heart and hand."

"I have no words to thank thee, Wat—'tis in vain to make the effort; but thou shalt one day acknowledge me neither unmindful nor ungrateful for thy years of kindness to me. Indeed I would not have thee think me ungrateful, for howsoever inexplicable my conduct may seem to thee now, bear with thee the assurance that none dwelleth in my heart more highly, more fondly, more proudly, than Wat Tyler."

"Oh! Violet, dear Violet, if you knew, if you only felt, how very dear those words came to my heart, you would be—if it is possible to come near it—almost as glad, as overjoyed, as I now am," cried Wat, with a sudden burst, quite forgetting a resolve he had inwardly made not to let Violet believe he was so completely a sufferer by her loving another.

"To hear thee say thou'rt overjoyed, maketh my heart glad most certainly, as it ever did, Wat, and I trust ever will; and now thou perhaps canst add to its pleasure by telling me thy meaning, in saying the time may not be far distant when I shall be folded in my mother's embrace. Hast thou any motive beyond a kind wish in saying this, and if thou hast, wilt thou tell me what it is?"

"As far as I may without compromising my word of honour, which is passed not to divulge what I have heard. Yesterday morning I strolled into the wood for game, and encountered by accident a stranger, who, seeing I was from Brenchley, asked me respecting thee and Halbert. I answered such questions as he demanded, to the extent a discretionary caution permitted me; and, as you may judge, much to my surprise, he related some portion of your foster-father's life before he came to Brenchley, and the means by which you were placed in his charge, and what he subsequently did until your arrival in Brenchley. He then told me that the villain Martin du Bois had planned with Grif of the Bloody Hand to carry you off, and we concerted means to prevent their diabolical scheme, which was in a degree successful; I—"

"But what said he of my parents, dear Wat?" interrupted Violet.

"Nothing: thy parentage is enshrouded in mystery, and those portions connected with it I must not divulge; but I will tell thee what I can do—I can seek out this mysterious man of the wood, and ascertain from him all that he knows, accompanied by a permission to make thee acquainted with that of which I am already possessed."

"A thousand thanks, dear Wat. I burn to hear of the authors of my being. Know you whom this stranger is? Sir Walter Manny mentioned him, as having acquainted him with my situation, and brought him to my rescue; and you tell me he was aware of the wicked designs of Martin du Bois ere he attempted to put them into execution."

"I cannot tell thee, for I know not; but believe him one who has suffered some great wrong from Grif and his band, which he purposes avenging with terrible interest; but I will endeavour to learn for thee all you may wish to hear, and if I should be so fortunate as to gather such information as will gladden thee, my feet will not slumber, nor my tongue falter, until thou hearest it. And now, Violet, to thy chamber again; commit thyself to a refreshing sleep, and let no thought of a latent want of affection for me hinder its approach or thy enjoyment of it when it comes. Remember, thy happiness is all I desire—all I hope for; and in whatever way it may be essential to thy content to bestow thy heart, hesitate not to give it, for that which yields thee happiness secures mine. No words, Violet; I will sacrifice the pleasure I feel in hearing thy voice for the sake of thy quick retiring. For the present, farewell—sweet slumbers to thee!"

He led her, unhesitatingly, to her chamber door; she turned and smiled on him as they reached it—it was a very sweet smile—it played upon her features until the door hid her beautiful face from his eyes; and then, feeling as if a gleam of sunshine had been suddenly withdrawn from the spot on which he stood, he returned to the bedside of Halbert with a heart which, if still in a degree of doubt, was considerably lightened by the explanation he had had with Violet.

CHAPTER X.

"Led him to where the rock appear'd to jut
And form a something like a Triton's hut;
For all was darkness for a space."
"*The Island.*"—BYRON.

"Have mercy, Jesu!—Soft! I did but dream.—
O! coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!—
The lights burn blue.—It is now dread midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear?"
"*Richard III.*"—SHAKSPERE.

"What's here? A mist! No more?—
What would you? Speak!
Spirit or man?
* * * * *
Your form is man's, and yet
You may be a devil."
"*Deformed Transformed.*"—BYRON.

GRIF of the Bloody Hand, after the escape of Sir Walter Manny with Violet, led Martin du Bois to a cave, where he and his men found such rude shelter as it afforded for repose and from the violence of the weather. As they proceeded, Grif, who was faint, and needed support, instead of giving it, found himself with a most troublesome companion. At every flash of lightning, with its crashing accompaniment of thunder, Martin clung in the most terrified manner to his arm, notwithstanding

he was several times, in a manner which wanted but little strength to make it brutal, thrown off. Again and again his arm was seized by Martin, who frequently pointed out places for Grif's observation, asking whether he did not see there some hideous spectre. Grif expostulated, pshaw'd, swore, and at length grew so exasperated, he vowed he would leave the frightened Martin to himself, if he persisted in his weak-mindedness; but Martin ceased not his ebullitions of terror, nor gave Grif a chance of putting his threat into execution, for he kept too close to his side. It was in vain that Grif argued, and employed every epithet as vile as it was contemptuous. Martin was horribly frightened, and all Grif's efforts to put courage into him were wasted; it was not only the annoyance of being clutched hold of every minute that Grif was enraged at, but that it brought thoughts which he could wish well buried in oblivion. Rough, bloody-minded, and brutal as he was, he had his share of superstitious terrors; and once, when Martin stopped and cried that he heard shrieks and wails, as if some spirit was suffering the tortures of the damned, Grif seized him by the arm with a grip that made him shrink, and listened with a blanched face and staring eyeballs to the sound of the wind as it whistled, and howled and moaned through the branches and leaves, at the same time muttering—

"He is dead! I know him to be dead, for I saw the jaw fall, and the hands, which were clenched till the blood started from his nails, relax; and he was buried deep—I know it. It cannot be he that now shrieks and wails, as he did on that horrid night. What should he do here? Here—ha! If his spirit should face me, and seize upon me, and shout in my ears what he shouted on that night—no, no, it cannot be; it was but the wind—but the wind."

"And yet it sounded so shill and mournful, it was like a wailing shriek," uttered Martin, fearfully.

"Ha! thou terrified idiot!" cried Grif, suddenly recovering himself, and thrusting Martin from him; "it is thy miserable fears which make thee convert each glimmer of light and moan of the wind into a howling spectre. By the foul fiend! it would serve thee rightly if I buried my skean in thy coward heart, for making me remember things I would fain forget. Look you—you frightened fool! if you lay finger again upon me to infect me with thy superstitious fright, I will make thee wish nature had made thee a little braver; so look thou keepest thy hands from me."

Without further word he proceeded, and Martin followed as close as he dared—quite abject in his terror—without drawing upon him the execution of Grif's threat. In this manner they threaded the wood until they arrived at the cave. When there, Grif drank largely from a skin of wine; it seemed to refresh him mightily, and he seated himself upon a rude bench, motioning Martin to do the same, which he obeyed. When he was seated Grif exclaimed, contemptuously—

"Art thou not the rankest coward that ever was born? the most miserably frightened wretch bearing the form of man?"

"He is a liar to the teeth who says so," cried Martin, fiercely.

"Oh ho! the strength of safety," laughed Grif scornfully; "thou art valiant now, my gallant knight! he is a liar who says otherwise. Why, I tell thee, man, thou art the most cowardly poltroon I ever saw—nay, start not—nor frown so fiercely; I laugh at thy rage, for I know it but the hissing of a goose."

"Bog! thou shalt find, coward as I am, I fear not thee!" cried Martin, springing from his seat, and dashing his fist violently in Grif's face, and at the same moment seizing a sword which lay near him, stood prepared to receive the attack of Grif, who in a paroxysm of fury drew his ponderous sword and rushed at Martin. They hacked and hewed at each other with the greatest determination, Martin at least displaying both dexterity and a perfect knowledge of his weapon; while Grif, whose strength was his art, whirled and cut with his sword as if each blow would shiver Martin's sword to pieces, but did not succeed, for Martin, on the contrary, by a dexterous foil, disarmed him; but the next instant Grif seized him by the wrists, wrested the sword from him by sheer strength, threw it away, and flung Martin heavily upon the ground; he drew his skean with the rapidity of thought—it gleamed in the air and descended, but his hand was caught by Martin with a grasp to which desperation lent almost a giant's strength, and each struggled hard for the mastery. A torch which glared from the side of the cave flashed on Martin's face, as he gazed fiercely and frowningly into Grif's, which hung over it; the gleam of that torch saved his life. A remembrance seemed to strike Grif, for he exclaimed—

"He looks as his father did on that night. Pshaw! Get up, Martin. I spare thy life, though a blow should only be repaid by blood. We are fools to quarrel, for there is nothing to gain and much to lose—thou thy life, and I a round sum of money. Get up. Let what is passed be forgotten." As he concluded, he arose, and seated himself in his old place.

"I do not object, but no man shall call me coward," growled Martin, as he regained his feet, and seated himself by his side.

"Pshaw!" cried Grif. "Beshrew me but thy conduct to night, save in this last instance, looked marvellously like cowardice, or else I ne'er saw it shown. Why, man, if thou hadst not delayed by thy fear, or what was very like it—call it by what name you will, you might have been far enough away by this time with the prize you so much covet, and for which you are content to pay so high a price."

"The feeling I showed to-night is not cowardice, Grif," said Martin gravely, "though, upon reflection, I confess it looks like it. But it is not, for I fear no man living; but I do not possess the same courage to oppose unearthly things. Spectres, devils, phantoms, call them what you will, they cow my valour. I cannot oppose a nerve to them—the blood leaves my heart, my knees shake, I feel powerless."

"That is, horribly frightened," exclaimed Grif, suddenly; "but you are not fool enough to believe there are such things in reality?"

"I am satisfied there are, for I have seen them."

"In imagination, perhaps."

"No, in reality, visible, and, if such were their nature, palpable to the touch."

"Pshaw! what fantastical notions have you got hold of? There can be no such things."

Grif very much wished, for private reasons, to be assured there were no such things.

"There not only can be, but is. My confessor, a holy man, assured me, when I told him I had seen them, that they were sent here for some special purpose, or that they were unquiet spirits, who, when living, had committed crimes and were doomed to wander to their own and others' torments on earth, for a certain number of years before they went to damnation."

"And did he say sprites of murdered people—those who were horribly—cruelly murdered, appeared to their murderers, or went straight at once to Heaven?"

"If they had been sinful—and who among us is not?"

"Neither you nor I can lay claim to being exempt."

"I should, bad as I may be—be very sorry to lay claim to such wickedness as thine, Grif; but that is not the question. If they had been sinful, they were allowed to haunt any one who had done them any great wrong, as a trifling punishment here to prepare them for what was to come hereafter."

"Is there any special clause about kings?"

"About kings? No. Why all murders are murders, whether the murdered man be king or serf; and the murderer of a king is as likely to suffer the horrors of a spectre haunting him sleeping or waking—Oh those horrid words—sleeping or waking—how they ring in my ears! Sleeping or—"

"Well," shouted Grif, as Martin began rambling in his speech, "what then? as if he had cut down a serf, I suppose."

"The same; the punishment is equal where the crime is equal. What made thee think of a king?"

"I wondered what Walter Tyrrel felt after slaying William Rufus."

"Or something nearer than that, those who so horribly—"

"Peace! no more of this foolery—there's no truth in it; I'll never believe it, or else why did I not see—the priest hath fooled thee; so no more of it. Keep thy thoughts and energies for this world; let us be frightened of the other when the time arrives to fear it. Now, I have much to do to-morrow early, and want rest to night, and shall, therefore, throw myself on yonder couch; but before I sleep, I would have some further arrangement with thee. Thou'rt still bent upon having the girl—this Violet Evesham?"

"I am, most resolutely."

"And will pay the price which to-night thou didst agree to?"

"To the farthing, so thou dost but place her safely in my possession."

"Fear not; the sum is too large—the temptation too great, not to try hard to gain it. She shall be thine, if it is in the power of my band to accomplish it; and, with the means I shall employ, I fear not its success."

"What are the means?"

"I have not exactly decided upon more than the general plan. I will attack the village, and burn every stick to the ground. My devils will be willing enough, for there are plenty of pretty lasses there."

Martin shuddered, and almost turned from the ruffian in disgust and horror, as he said—

"You will not surely commit so damnable a piece of villany?"

"I both can and will—but that is no affair of thine; it is not on thy account it will be done, but upon my own, and all thy interference in their favour will be useless, so do not waste breath in attempting it. They have brought it upon themselves—they have sought for it, and shall have it. I intended them no harm—they attacked me, and defeated a part of my band; besides, one of them, a mere boy, but with a cursed strength, overthrew me, lowering me in the eyes of my people. They shall see how I will repay my degradation."

"How will you?"

"I will have a gibbet made which shall be high enough to overlook the village; he shall be hung upon it by the wrists, and feast his eyes on our proceedings; when we quit the place, my sturdy Wat Tyler shall be a corpse."

"I am well satisfied that such shall be his fate, since you have told me that it is to him I owe my ill-success to-day; that it was he, as I gather, who bound me to the tree; why let him perish—the more painfully he suffers, the more pleasing to me; but, for the villagers, your vengeance is too sweeping. Think better of it, Grif."

"You may as well attempt to blow down this cave with your mouth, as waste breath in trying to change me from my purpose. I have determined upon it, and shall not lightly or easily be induced to alter my resolve; but I have not yet decided whether to tear Violet away before I attack the village, or when I am doing so, and have her carried off during the confusion."

"She might be hurt in the fray," suggested Martin, "you had better carry her off first."

"But should she be missed directly, we shall have villagers alarmed, and ready to oppose us; and if they are, it may cost me more men than I care just now to spare to put in effect my intentions. This Wat Tyler is, I suppose a lover of Violet's, and will not be far away when we approach; a shriek from the girl might bring him and the whole of the tribe upon us, and render the carrying off a matter of no easy accomplishment: so I think I shall decide upon bearing her away in the confusion."

"But what if a stray bolt should strike her?"

"It would in all probability kill her; but I shall make such arrangements as will prevent any such unfortunate circumstance occurring; the fellows who bore her off to-day are very expert—"

"Very expert indeed," interrupted Martin, sarcastically, "to suffer a horseman, single-handed, to rescue her from their possession."

"It is very strange they have not returned yet; they are not the men to be foiled at trifles; there must have been good cause for them to have parted with her. It was Sir Walter Manny who rescued her, and probably he had a score or so of stout lances to aid him."

"Not he; if he had, he would have brought them through the forest with him as a safeguard."

"You don't know him. Young as he is, he cares neither for man nor devil; he was far more likely to send them away and come on alone, because they should not see where the maiden resided; he would never be deterred from passing any place for fear that there would be men to oppose him. I have seen him cut his way through ranks fearlessly and right gallantly. He was knighted by Edward at Halidon Hill for doing such extraordinary deeds of daring as no other man in the army even attempted. No; I am satisfied that it must have been some pressing necessity which made my men yield up Violet. However, we shall hear what story they have to tell upon their return."

A loud hollow laugh rung through the cave. Grif and Martin both sprung from their seats and stared at each other with unqualified astonishment: for a moment they remained immoveable, as if waiting for a repetition of what they had heard, but it came not. Grif then suddenly seized a torch, and hastily surveyed the cave and its recesses with the strictest scrutiny, without ascertaining what had produced the sound; he looked outside in every direction, but returned unsuccessful.

"Have you ascertained the cause of that strange unearthly laugh?" asked Martin, looking shudderingly and anxiously round, crossing himself most devotedly at the same time.

"No," returned Grif; "it is very strange; it could not have been the wind."

"Oh, no!" quickly uttered Martin, "the wind moans, and sighs, shrieks and groans; that we just heard was a laugh—a malicious, spritish laugh; that of some forest demon, be assured."

"Pish! I am assured thou'rt a fool to give way to such idle fancies."

"To what do you attribute the sound?"

"To, perhaps, if we knew it, some very simple cause; I am not yet convinced that it was a laugh."

"I am, quite; and a hollow, horrible laugh it was."

"Bah! as you are so satisfied that it was a laugh, I am surprised you did not see who uttered it."

"I—I think I did—"

"What?"

"I say I thought I saw some misty shade, some phantom-looking being, enveloped in a mantle, glide across the mouth of the cave just after I heard the laugh."

"Pshaw! Your brain is stuffed with these foolish conceits; you saw nothing but the flickering of the torch; the whole affair is not worth a second thought. Yaw! I am weary, my head throbs dreadfully—I shall to sleep; and do thou likewise retire to yon corner, you will find a couch there, you can rest upon it until morning; we will then decide for certainty upon the manner in which we will carry off the girl. Good night, Martin; mind you do not dream of devils less real than my men, and then swear you saw them."

"Ah, Grif, treat the subject with what scorn you please, you will perhaps some day have too good cause to acknowledge that there are devils less real, but no less terrible, than your men."

"Ah, perhaps so—I'll wait; when I see them I'll believe, but not till then. Do not be alarmed at footsteps in the night; the band enter and depart at all hours. Good night."

"Good night," responded Martin; and imitating the example of Grif, who, as soon as he had uttered his last words, had stretched himself upon a bed of leaves, he threw himself upon a couch pointed out to him by his fearful companion, and was soon fast asleep.

His slumbers were broken; and disturbed dreams, of the most horrible description, haunted and tormented him all the night. Hideous faces grinned on all sides at him, gibbering and chattering with frightful grimaces; he thought himself wandering in places horrible to conceive, impelled by some power which he could not resist; at every step snakes and loathsome reptiles sprung up in his path, while from corners and turnings devilish sprites, screeching and howling, darted out and greeted him, with distorted faces, sickening to behold; now his dreaming fancy placed him on a pinnacle of awful height—he felt giddy—that he must fall a depth of more than a thousand feet, and below there were horrid clamouring faces and extended hands to receive him. This passed away, and he was walking alone in a wood; it was desolate and lone; the way grew wilder as he advanced; each step he took the trees grew closer and closer, thicker and darker; he could not stop, he was obliged to proceed, although he would have given worlds to have turned and fled; his path became narrower until he arrived at a dark, impenetrable dell. As yet, no sound had met his ear, not a breath of wind had sighed, not a leaf rustled or a flower stirred—all was frightfully still and silent; there was a horror upon him of something which he saw not, *but which he should see;* he felt himself cold as ice; he quaked with fear; his heart panted and beat with a violence which was agonising. The darkness was intense; he knew he was among trees and plants, but could see them not; the air seemed as thick as it was lightless, and he breathed it with difficulty; he tried to close his eyes, as if to shut out the sight of what was coming, but could not, and then he saw a pale blue light shine in the darkness. It was but a speck at first, but it increased until it took the form of the face which had glared upon him that day in the dell. It advanced close to his own—horribly close—he saw the white fingers come shining whitely in the direction of his throat. They came slow, as if they would never reach him; but after a suspense, which was worse than death, he felt them stone-cold twine about his neck, chilling every drop of blood in his veins. They held him there, so utterly overcome with horror, he had not an atom of strength to resist; then the rigid lips opened, and he heard the terribly-remembered voice cry, with a loudness which seemed to stun him—

"Murderer! sleeping or waking, henceforth I will be ever present to thee!"

He could endure it no longer; he struggled with immense exertion to rid himself of this horrid thing; he shrieked fearfully, and he awoke. Large drops of cold perspiration stood thickly on his brow, and he groaned from exhaustion. He could with difficulty remember where he really was; the torch was extinguished and the cave buried in profound darkness, and he could scarcely satisfy himself that he was not still in that dreadful dell, alone with the body of him he believed he had murdered. After a little while, returning recollection satisfied him, and he gave a groan of relief. As if he was doomed that night to be terrified to death, the groan was responded to, but with such a distinct difference of tone, that nothing could have made him believe it was an echo of his own. His heart immediately commenced beating, even audibly, and he held his breath to listen intently. The groan was repeated, long, low, and teeming with agony, as if it came from one yielding up his breath for ever. Martin grew sick with apprehension, was cold and faint with fear; he bent all his powers of hearing to catch a repetition of that frightful moan, but in vain—all was still as the grave. Tired nature at length overcame his fears, and he again sunk into a disturbed sleep. How long he had slept he knew not, but he was suddenly awakened by fierce and angry exclamations, which Grif was pouring forth with stentorian force. It was broad daylight; he leaped from the couch and nearly stumbled over the cause of Grif's shouting and rage. Upon the ground, near the couch upon which he had slept, lay, stretched upon his back, one of the devils, with a long knife buried in his heart. The man was dead and cold, and Grif, surrounded by several devils with wondering faces, was storming furiously respecting the manner and by whom the deed was done. He questioned Martin angrily about it, but received no answer at all satisfactory.

"How is it," he roared, "that a man is murdered within three feet of the spot where you slept, and you know nothing about it?"

"I may ask you the same question—you were as near to him as I. How is it you know no more about it than I?"

"It is false; I slept at least twenty or thirty feet from him, and thou by his side. There is foul play here; and look you, Martin, if I thought for an instant you were playing me false, I would bury this knife in your ribs ere you were another minute older."

"You are mad, Grif. Do you think I would stain my hands with the blood of such carrion as he?" demanded Martin, haughtily, without quailing the slightest before the fierce glare of Grif's inflamed and angry eyes.

"I can divine no cause you can possibly have for such a deed, else I would not trust you," exclaimed Grif. Then turning abruptly to such of his men as

were standing round him, asked, "Have any of you had a quarrel with the dead man, and sought this mode of revenging yourselves?"

Every man declared a negative with the most eager readiness.

"If I find that it is as I surmise," continued Grif, "that he has been murdered to gratify a private revenge, the man who has done it shall not long survive, and not die so easily. Bear him away, and bury him."

Four men advanced to obey him, and lifted the body up. A sudden exclamation from them induced Grif to look at the body, and he beheld a small green shining snake twisting and twining along the breast of the murdered man. One of the devils seized it, flung it down, and killed it. It excited but a momentary surprise, and then the men carried the body out.

"Have Quintal and those who accompanied him returned yet?" inquired Grif of the devils standing by.

"No," replied one of them. "Two of our people went out at daybreak in search of them, but they have not yet returned. Albeit they should be here by this, if they have been unsuccessful; and before this, if successful."

"Let me know as soon as they arrive; and now, spread something to eat before us. How high is the sun?"

"Three parts of his way to the meridian."

"Ah! so late; we must be brief. Sit, Martin, and make thy meal quickly. I have to collect my men, and organise them for this night's work——"

"To-night?"

"Ay! I never let my revenge slumber longer than I can help. The village shall be destroyed this night, and Violet placed in your possession."

"At what hour?"

"Two hours after sun down."

"Where shall I station myself to meet thee with the prize?"

"You will not meet me—I must superintend the attack; but a party of my men shall be at the outskirts on this side of the village with the maiden. Do not loiter from any cursed fear or nonsense when she is in thy possession, but away at the top of thy speed."

"I will observe thy counsel, never fear. From what point do you attack the village? and how do you purpose gaining possession of Violet?"

"My plan is easily told. Halbert Evesham's house stands upon the south side of the village, and the best point to attack the village is from the south-west; I will arrange my band there, and detach four or five men to Violet's dwelling-place. When they reach it and effect an entrance, they will give me a signal, which will be the one for attack; every inmate will then be too much occupied with their own situation to think about her, and she may easily be borne away without opposition. You must be in readiness to receive them at the same spot you appointed to meet my men yesterday, because I can only spare thee one man—the aid of the rest I shall need."

"I will be there."

"Ay! look you do not fail, or else I may take the damsel myself, and make her the lady of the wood."

"You need not fear me—nothing shall prevent me."

"Not even a ghost?" cried Grif, derisively.

"Not even a ghost," uttered Martin, firmly.

The mouth of the cave was at this moment darkened, and a couple of men entered, with visages betokening matters of wonder and importance.

"What news now?" cried Grif, as they entered.

"We have just returned from the dell a little on this side Troubridge—we have been in search of Quintal, Belitre, Growl, and Luc."

"Well, have you met with them?"

"Yes; we have indeed."

"Where were they? where did the knaves loiter?"

"We found them hanging from the branches of the large beech tree which stands there."

"What!" thundered Grif, in a voice that made the cave echo with its sound.

"It is even as we say," replied the man who had before spoken; "they were hanging there, quite dead."

"Fiends of hell! how could this have happened? What did you?"

"We cut them down, and found they had been slaughtered before they were hung. Luc had his skull clove in twain; Quintal was fearfully slashed across the face, and stabbed through the heart; both Belitre and Growl were served the same, all but the slashes in the face."

"Death and hell! that I should lose four of my stoutest hands. Did you leave them there?"

"No; we dug a deep hole, and buried them. There was one strange thing connected with them."

"What was that?"

"We found a small snake twisted round each of their necks."

"A snake!" responded Grif, with surprise.

"Yes—an adder. Each of them had one."

"There is something meant in this—what it is, I'll do my best to find out," muttered Grif, musingly, "A snake—and one on the murdered man this morning. There's a meaning in this—I'll fathom it, or the devil's in it."

"Think you not now that some of Sir Walter Manny's followers have been at work?" exclaimed Martin.

"No," replied Grif, in a voice which almost made him recoil. "No; it is these martial would-be-warrior villagers who have done it—of that I am sure. Thinking to pacify them, I told them I had nought to do with the carrying-off of their village pet, and gave them permission to slay such of my men as they found with her in their possession. By the foul fiend! the dogs have taken me at my word; but they shall smart for it most bitterly. I will repay the loss of each man with a dozen lives—I will. But no matter—they shall repent what they have done, or I am miscalled Grif of the Bloody Hand."

"I do not believe you belie your name," drily observed Martin.

"I am not in a mood just now to be trifled with, I would have you understand; therefore hesitate before you pursue those observations, or you may have a personal proof of the justice of my title."

"I have not a doubt upon the subject," returned Martin, coolly. "Now tell me what I am to do with myself during the day?"

"Whatever you please—I care not. Hang yourself, if you like; but if you should not do society that justice, stroll about near to the spot where your presence will be needed, in order that you may not fail to be there when the time comes. For me, I have much to do, and shall in all probability not see you again for some time. Send me the pay by some trusty hand here to the wood. Let your messenger enter it at the Tonbridge side, and keep the path straight before him; I will take care that he falls in with those who shall ease him of his load. So now, Martin du Bois, we part for a time; when next we meet, I shall know you under a different title."

"It is likely; but I would have you know me by no other name until then."

"Your wish shall be observed. You remember that the sum is three thousand merks."

"Three thousand!"

the second for this present attempt; and a third for—"

"No more—I remember. You shall have the

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

"Ay! shall I enumerate? A thousand for the first essay to carry off the girl—you were the cause of its failure, therefore you pay all the same; money. I will be at the appointed spot, and let me hope that you will not fail me."

"Fear not, my men shall be there with the girl.

Farewell, Martin du Bois—success to our enterprise."

"Amen! Farewell, Grif; and as you keep your promise, so shall you be rewarded by me."

"I have no doubt of receiving my reward. Away with you—the time is short to do my work in."

Martin left the cave when he had ceased speaking, and walked out into the wood. He strolled on in the direction of Brenchley, almost unconscious whither his footsteps were leading him. He sunk deep into thought, and ran over a catalogue of acts—a retrospect of villanies he had committed—and found that latterly he had made very large strides; additions to the list which, though fewer on the average in actual quantity to those preceding, yet in magnitude far excelling. If he progressed in this manner, he bade fair to rival his coadjutor, Grif of the Bloody Hand, in rascality; violence and bloodshed formed the staple commodities of his late engagements. There was surely a punishment for such actions, if not here, most assuredly hereafter. He was fully aware of that, and attributed the most awful degree of pain to be involved in it; yet he could not master the desires Nature had grafted in him, and much as he dreaded it, must render himself liable to all the tortures he was taught to believe would be inflicted upon him for such conduct as his; and all for the want of exercising a little self-command.

Among other things he speculated upon the conversation which had transpired between himself and Grif, respecting ghosts, phantoms, devils, and spirits. It was clear Grif did not believe in them, because he had never seen one. Why should he not be as much a disbeliever? He could not actually say he had ever seen one, although he fancied he had; yet there was always a doubt respecting it. If he could but think as Grif thought, how he might enjoy himself! And what was there to prevent him? nothing, if he could only exert the same strength of mind to oppose an unknown danger which he never was at a loss for when in one real and known; he would try, and he cursed the weakness which had so long chained down his powers to so absurd a superstition; but then Grif's scepticism might be sheer ignorance—and again, these horrible spectres might only appear to certain people; his father confessor had so strongly assured him that there were such things, he had so entirely given himself up to the idea also, that it was a hard matter to think otherwise; still, if they did not appear to Grif, why should they appear to him, who certainly was not by much so great a villain? then, perhaps, they did show themselves to Grif, but he would not acknowledge it, and if they did, he did not seem to care much for them;—neither would he—why should he, more than did Grif? No, he felt that it was a weakness which seemed ridiculous, and stamped the possessor with the appearance of the greatest cowardice. He resolved to rid himself of the weakness, and be under circumstances a bold, daring man—if a villain in heart, a brave one. As he arrived at this conclusion, he looked firmly round him with an air which seemed to express, "who shall say me nay?" He had wandered into a fine open glade, and it suddenly struck him he would seek out one of the dark dells, and wander boldly through it, in defiance of wood demons, forest sprites, or other unearthly appearances, which he lately so much dreaded; accordingly, he struck off from the path he was pursuing to one where the trees appeared to grow thickest, and soon got entangled in a labyrinth of stems and trunks of all species; he had forgotten the object with which he entered this maze, and was indulging in dreams of possessing Violet, whose beauteous face and sweet form had taken hold of his heart with a strength he liked not, even to himself, to acknowledge; still it was so, and when he dismissed that thought, it was with no little pleasure that he dwelt with fond recollection upon her charms; deeply had he sunk into this reverie, and heedless of the narrowing of his path, went on; he had reached a silent, solitary spot, his arms were folded, and his head bent towards the ground as he walked slowly along, when his progress was unexpectedly arrested by a loud deep voice exclaiming—

"Stay!"

He started as if he had been shot, and turned his eyes towards the spot from whence the voice proceeded: directly before him, beneath the spreading arms of a huge tree, stood a being, closely enveloped in a black mantle; upon his head was a steel hamlet, of rude fashion, similar to that worn by the devils, and a mask covered half his face;—his eyes glared like balls of fire from eyelet-holes in the mask, and his right hand stretched forth pointingly to Martin, who gazed with an indescribable horror upon the mysterious stranger, imagining him at once to be a veritable wood demon. There was no need of repeating the command to stop: had Violet been on the opposite side of the stranger, and implored him to come to her side, his weakness would have prevented him advancing an inch.

"Listen," said the stranger, in deep tones, "and, if thou valuest thy life, obey me. Thou hast plotted with Grif of the Bloody Hand to bear off a maiden yet as pure as undefiled snow, to be the victim of thy base intentions; thou shalt not succeed, for if thou didst, thy punishment would be so tremendous I shudder to think upon it: to spare thee a fate thus dreadful, thy scheme will be prevented; means are already on foot for that purpose; also to defeat the hellish project Grif at this moment is indulging, and employing his best exertions to execute; his design, probable as it appears to him, will be frustrated entirely, completely, in a manner as little expected by him as it will be effectual. And now, thou evil son of a more evil parent, for whom dost thou take me? Speak."

Martin uttered a few words which were inaudible.

"For whom dost thou take me? Speak!" repeated the stranger, in tones which seemed to freeze Martin's blood.

"A forest spirit," mumbled he.

"Aye! the spirit of vengeance: know me by this token." As he uttered this, he suddenly bared his arm, and Martin with trembling horror beheld a green snake, writhing, twisting and twining about it. "Dost thou recognize me now?"

"Thou'rt he who destroyed the four devils who carried away Violet Evesham."

"Thou'rt right."

"And slew the man who slept near me last night."

"Even him! Dost thou doubt my power, or shall I give thee further proof?"

"No, no," uttered Martin, faintly, ready to sink to the ground.

"Shall I tell thee I know who thou art; that, bad as you already are, you are not one tithe part the villain thy father is: thou'rt Martin du Bois, forsooth—'tis well thou should'st bear any name but thine own, a name which thy sire has made so infamous, that future ages shall execrate his memory."

"My father!" reiterated Martin, in a low voice.

"Ay, that detestable monster! dost thou know that Grif of the Bloody Hand was his prime agent, and assisted in all his villanous schemes?"

"No!"

"'Tis false! Did he not tell thee two nights since that he knew thee a boy, an ungovernable, spoiled boy; at the time he knew thee he was in thy father's service; together, and with the aid of one no less a

monster, they committed a murder, the most foul, the most cruel, ever imagined; there is a day of retribution at hand for that, and other things, which shall make them tremble. For you, self-styled Martin du Bois, stay thee in thy career ere it is too late; fear what must come ere you make its coming inevitable; abandon thy foul designs, and learn, trembler! the man only who is strictly moral fears not evil in any shape, now or hereafter. My words, mark me, are not to be held lightly, or be unremembered; if thou dost disregard them now, in the hour of thy agony they shall burn on thy brain in letters of fire. Of that enough; more have I to say to thee, but not here. Follow me!"

"Follow thee?" replied Martin, in a voice which estimated the request as an impossibility.

"Ay, follow me! thou dost not dare refuse. The lightning which blasts the tree is not more sudden or certain than thy death if thou dost hold back."

"I cannot follow thee," murmured Martin, fearfully.

"Thou canst not? thou shalt! Would'st thou have a green snake twining round thy neck? Ha! that makes thee start! if you hesitate an instant it shall be crawling and creeping about thy dead body, ere thou canst beg for mercy. Art thou ready?"

"Lead on."

"Nay, never cross thyself, Martin; the virtuous alone should do that, the wicked have nothing to do with the holy symbol."

"I will follow thee; I am ready. Lead on."

"'Tis well. I am glad to see thee thus willing; it tells me thou dost not think me a sprite of darkness. Follow—Yet one moment; when does Grif commence his attack?"

"To-night."

"Ha! at what time?"

"Two hours after sundown."

"And that is the appointed time for seizing Violet and bearing her away?"

"It is."

"Then is there not one moment to be lost. Follow!"

"Whither?" asked Martin, who began to have imaginings that the stranger was not quite so much a phantom as he first imagined.

"Obey, and question not; must I repeat the penalty of thy refusal?"

"Lead on," answered Martin, in a subdued tone.

The speaker immediately struck into a small path leading from the dell in which they had met, and Martin followed with a reluctance he was fearful of exhibiting. When he beheld his conductor glide swiftly among trees he found it difficult even slowly to thread, and when ever and anon the mysterious stranger turned his head to see if he was following, his eyes glared out of the mask with such strange brilliancy, that his doubts were quickly dispelled respecting the supernatural character of his guide. After they had progressed some distance, they arrived at a sombre-looking, narrow copse, which the light had great difficulty in penetrating: it was only here and there that a straggling ray was successful. The stranger, awful looking to Martin previously, now became considerably more so, in the dim light of the thickly shaded copse. When somewhat advanced in the gloomy place, he stopped, and turned round abruptly to Martin, saying—

"What plan of attack does Grif of the Bloody Hand purpose employing to-night?"

"I do not know his plan," was the reply.

"Did he not tell thee by what means he would place Violet in thy power?"

"He merely said the south-west was the best side upon which to attack the village; that he would arrange his men there, despatching four or five of them to Violet's dwelling-place, which is on the south, bear her off, and then commence the attack. This is as much as I know of his plan."

"It is enough for me; I know now how to act, and I must be doing at once. You must remain here."

"Remain here?" echoed Martin, faintly.

"Ay! even as you did, not far from hence, when Wat Tyler placed you there."

"What! bound to a tree, to suffer tortures worse than death? I will not; I will not."

"You have no alternative; it is essential to my purpose that thou shouldst, and I will take care thou dost. Offer not to make any resistance: you know not the extent of my power; you are weaponless, and cannot even defend yourself from a common enemy, much less from such an one as I."

"I care not for your power—I will resist to the last."

"Rash fool, tempt not thy fate."

"Slay me, hew limb from limb, cut me piecemeal, I care not what. I will endure all—anything rather than again bear the agony of that dreadful situation."

"What fear ye?"

"No matter: I will not again be subjected to such horrors."

"What fear ye, miserable wretch? That thy bad deeds should rise in terrible array before thee? Hadst thou not committed them, they would not now appear, like phantoms of horror, to frighten thee; it is the penalty of crime to suffer such terrors of a wicked conscience; thy acts have drawn the agony upon thee, and thou must bear it. Your silence—though not your death—is needful to me; you must be placed securely, where no human eye can see thee, and where thou canst do nought to mar such means as I may employ to defeat the infernal intent of the monster Grif of the Bloody Hand."

"If thou'rt a spirit, thou hast the power to crush me to dust, and purchase my silence, beyond doubt. Do it—anything rather than put thy dreadful purpose into execution. What I suffered, when bound to that tree, surpasses all bodily suffering the human frame can endure. I shall undergo the same tremendous tortures, perhaps of a more hideously frightful nature, which I then bore. I fear less to die the most painful death than suffer the horrors of that situation. If my silence is all you require, I swear by all that is holy, a rock or stone shall not be more dumb, more silent, than I will be; and that thou mayst be sure I do not betray thy intentions, I will follow thee wherever thou choosest to lead me, as a trained hound does its master. Mysterious being, whatsoe'er thou art, grant my prayer, or slay me."

"Oh, that thy father's son should implore thus to me—to me!" exclaimed the stranger, with a wild, exulting laugh. "It is fit it should be so—very fit. Look you, Martin du Bois, I am no spirit; but bear within me a spirit of revenge, which will not die until its dictates are fulfilled. Thy father wronged me years since, in a manner so deadly, so bitterly, that my life was blasted—withered at that one wrong; it changed my nature from peacefulness to a deadly desire for a bloody and exterminating revenge. I will have it—I shall live to have it, and bear a charmed life until it is accomplished. He inflicted this blow, in conjunction with Grif of the Bloody Hand, as he had done many other vile deeds, and to both will I repay tenfold the wrong they have done me. Dost thou think now, Martin, I will show thee mercy, when he who bore thee had none for me?"

"But thou'rt a man, and not a spirit; art a man, like myself?" asked Martin, eagerly.

"Now, Heaven forfend! Like *thee!* The Holy Virgin forbid I should be such a mean, miserable hound!"

"But thou'rt not a spirit—an unearthly being? and if human, I defy thee."

As Martin uttered these words, he sprung suddenly and fiercely on the stranger, and grappled him by the throat. The stranger was so taken by surprise, that he nearly fell on receiving the sudden attack; but hastily recovering himself, disengaged the mantle in which he was enveloped from his shoulders, and flung it over Martin's head before he could prevent him. Martin made desperate exertions to throw the stranger, but in vain; and now his head was buried in the cloak, depriving him of sight, his chance of success was lessened. Still, though trammelled by its folds, he did not quit his hold until the stranger, with a strength which seemed almost superhuman, lifted him from the ground, and threw him heavily upon his back, instantly knelt upon his chest, and seizing his uplifted arms, twisted a thong tightly round him, leaving one long end; he then rose and pulled Martin, almost senseless, up, passed the end of the thong round his body twice, then took a turn round the part which passed the centre of the back, and flung the remaining portion over the arm of a tree; he caught it as it came down the other side; using all his strength, he run Martin up to the branch, and made fast the line to a slight stem of a young tree; then, with the greatest agility, he climbed the trunk of the one from which Martin was suspended, and by the aid of one of the many massive branches he reached him, and severing the thong which detained him—still leaving a long end—he grasped him by the neck, and by sheer force dragged him up among the spreading arms of the tree; he withdrew the mantle which was still twisted round his head, and flung it to the ground, and proceeded to bind him firmly to the trunk, leaving his feet to rest only on a diverging bough. When he han done this, he drew forth a cross-hilted, long-bladed knife, which glittered as it was produced in Martin's eyes, as if there he saw his death-warrant. Making a desperate exertion to combat his fears of death; he tried to be calm and firm, but the weakness of his nature prevailed, and he burst forth in tones of earnest entreaty—

"Spare me! Spare me!"

"No," was the cold reply; but the stranger, instead of burying the knife in his heart, as he expected, used the hilt only to gag him, which he did most effectually, and then slid down the tree. He gathered up his mantle and threw it round him, detached the piece of thong from the stem to which he had attached it, and glided hastily away.

CHAPTER XI.

"Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green, and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs."—

BYRON.

"And I must from this land begone,
Because I cannot love but one.
* * * *
As some lone bird, without a mate
My weary heart is desolate.
* * * *
And I will cross the whitening foam,
And I will seek a foreign home,
Till I forget."

BYRON.

"I did not think to shed a tear
In all my miseries; but thou hast forced me
Out of thy honest truth to play the woman."

SHAKSPEARE.

"Let them come;
They come like sacrifices in their trim,
And to the fire-eyed maid of smoky war,
All hot and bleeding will we offer them:
* * * *
"I am on fire
To hear this rich reprisal is so nigh."

IBID.

THE morning was still young when a knocking at the outer door of Halbert's dwelling denoted the arrival of a visitor. Wat Tyler was watching by the side of Halbert, and Violet was in a refreshing slumber upon her couch, which, at the request of Wat, she had sought; the old man still slept; once only had he awaked since he had first fallen asleep, and was now again wrapped in deep repose. Wat sat lost in thought, and did not hear the first appeal for admittance; it was repeated, and starting hastily from his fit of abstraction, he descended the stairs and opened the door, and saw standing on the threshold Sir Walter Manny, the bridle of his horse Tricksy passed through his arm, and both looking as if they had enjoyed the refreshment of a long night's rest.

"Good morrow to thee, friend Wat," cried Walter, with an assumption of gaiety which was scarcely real. "How fares the invalid—marry, I should perhaps say invalids? I cry the gentle Violet's mercy for not mentioning her first. What is the news, good or bad? Thy face is pale and wan, man; thou hast spent the night in watching, which, after thy day's exertion, was a stretch of thy powers—that is, for one young as thee. Well, what hast thou to tell me? say good news, good news. By all the Saints in Heaven, I hate bad news; therefore, if thou hast any to tell, say nothing, and if any of good, out with every morsel."

"My news is good—thou shalt judge when I tell thee. Halbert has slept the night through, and is now sleeping, undisturbed by the feverish dreams which loss of blood usually occasions; Violet, too, I have every reason to believe, is slumbering; Halbert's wound is nothing but what a few day's rest will cure, and Violet's weakness but the result of fright and fatigue—the same remedy will restore her to health."

"Thy news is good, and most especially welcome to me, and I thank thee for it; now, if I might prescribe for thee, I should tell thee that a little of the same medicine which will bring Halbert and Violet health, will make thy cheek look ruddier, and thine eye brighter; at the present moment, time is no object to me, do thou therefore to thy home, where thy parents are making anxious inquiries for thee, throw thy limbs upon a couch, sleep away a few hours, and my life on't you'll wake another man. In the meantime, I will do thy duty here."

"I thank thee much for the kindness of thy offer, but cannot avail myself of it, for the reason that I do not feel the need of that of which my outward appearance exhibits a want. The wanness of my cheek and dulness of my eye are not the result of unrest, but of —of—I mean—that is—I should say—an ablution in the waters of the stream flowing along the bottom of the village will make me appear as fresh as though I had rested as usual. I trust you rested well in my humble abode?"

"Ay marry! that did I; never talk of thy humble abode. By'r Lady! the welcome I received made it a palace, and I most sincerely render unto thee and thy kindly parents my hearty thanks for their hospitality."

"There is no need of thanks where the welcome is honest; what you received beneath my father's roof was bestowed frankly and sincerely—less as a favour than as a right—and would have been yielded to any with the same cordiality as to you."

"I do not doubt it; still I was benefitted by their kindness, and I hold it a duty for a man to render thanks, as well as services, for benefits conferred."

"I acknowledge thee right; and let me, in terms more distinct, but not less sincere than those I last night uttered, thank thee for thy gallantry in rescuing Violet—"

"Tush, man, ne'er speak on't—there are no thanks due to me. Thanks! By the rood! I would sooner have lost my right arm—ay, Wat, my right arm, and that's a loss would be death to me—than harm should reach the sweet girl. I did but that which hundreds would have been glad, ay, proud to have done, had they the opportunity, even had they never seen the maiden previously, which I had, and therefore felt tenfold greater inclining to do my utmost to save her, than if I had never before beheld her. Thanks! If thanks are due anywhere, they are to my good fortune; nay, I almost thank the forest rascals for taking her away and giving me the chance, if it were not that they had polluted the maiden by their ungodly touch. No, my gallant friend, there are no thanks due to me, but there are to thee, for what thou didst. By Jupiter! I envy thee, having overthrown that huge monster of iniquity, known as Grif of the Bloody Hand. Thy loquacious friend, Michael, whom I encountered on my way hither, related to me the whole affray in such terms, such glowing language, that I almost regret that I did not have a bout with the enormous beast, when in his infamous society yester eve."

"Did you encounter him last night?"

"Ay, on our way here. By the way, I never remember to have offered up a prayer of thanks before for a storm; yet last night, when that sudden hurricane took place, I thanked God most devoutly for it; if it had not taken place, I fear much the dog Grif would have carried out his infernal intentions."

"You were, then, in his power?"

"Most completely. I had four or five devils, as they call the robbers, keeping a pretty tight hold of me; and the cowardly hound, Martin du Bois, was about to decamp with Violet, when that first tremendous burst of wind came, followed by the lightning and thunder: I took advantage of it, disengaged myself from the scoundrels who grasped me, placed Violet upon Tricksy, leaped on his back, and away we flew. Fearful as the storm raged, I rejoiced at it, for we left the rascals completely in the lurch, and were not long ere we reached this dwelling."

"Martin du Bois, said you?"

"Ay, Wat, you did not do your work on him effectually."

"It was not my fault. I bound him to a tree in the dreariest dell I know in the wood, and left him for the wolves to make a meal of. What became of him, know you?"

"I left him with his friends when I gallopped away; however, I have seen enough of his face to remember him, should we ever meet again; and if such a fortunate event should transpire, we shall see if Walter Manny is not more successful than Wat Tyler."

"The chances in that, as in other things, are in thy favour—No matter. Violet tells me that you learned her situation from a stranger."

"Ay, a stranger, indeed—I scarce ever saw a stranger—pardon the play on the word; I am not much given to the weakness. I was riding at a gentle pace through the wood, when pop appears a fellow all in black, from nowhere it seemed. There he stood, as if he grew there, a part and parcel of the wood, the same as any of the growing things in it—a strange malformation of vegetation which I had not noticed, until I pounced unexpectedly upon it. Tricksy—I marvel not—was as much astonished as was I; but he expressed his surprise in a bound that nearly placed me on my head at the stranger's feet—a feat I had neither desire nor expectation of performing; well, upon questioning my grim-looking friend as to his purpose there, with a little preamble he acquainted me with Violet's danger, and led me to the spot where it was transpiring; and after such a fashion did he guide me, that I began to conceive —just as much as the all-absorbing situation of Violet would let me—that he was a Lamia—"

"Anan?"

"A serpent which takes the human form. It is an old legend—but upon recollection, *I* think it only takes the shape of women—beautiful damsels who beguile you of your wits, and so forth, leaving you ultimately to discover that all pertaining to them, such as jewels and apparel, and such things, are mere moonshine, and nothing is left you for a wife but a serpent—a veritable snake. My tutor, an old Father, who was deeply read in ancient lore, told me the story, but he said it was a satire on society. I am not prepared to dispute his application of the tale. All I have to say is, that the twistings and windings and crawlings of my conductor remembered me of the fable so far; but if it is truth they are transmigrated to women's forms, then was this stranger no Lamia; for I can most incontrovertibly acquit him of being a beautiful woman."

"He led you to the spot where Violet was in jeopardy?"

"He did; the fellow seemed to know everything; told me all laudatory things respecting you; something about himself, and showed me a ruffian about to pollute the lips of Violet—"

"And what did you—what did you?"

"I seized him by the throat, and cut him down as I would any reptile about to sting any one I loved—that is, respected—I—I—was urged to instant flight

by my sombre acquaintance, and had barely time to place Violet before me upon the saddle, when three companions of the ruffian I had slain came running up, roaring like baying dogs. I cut one fellow down, and rode over the rest, dashing through the wood, until we encountered Grif and his band; fearing Violet might receive hurt from some stray blow, I reined in my steed in the shade of a large tree; but an expression from Grif, charging Martin du Bois with having murdered Helbert—"

"Ha! it was Martin du Bois who wounded him?"

"Exactly."

"Dog! I'll find him out; and when next he is in my power, I not leave him to the wild beasts, but send him to eternity at once."

"A just fate—justly merited. When Violet heard her foster-father's name mentioned she screamed, and we were discovered, dragged into the midst of the rogues before I had time to do aught in defence. The rest you are acquainted with."

"Ay. Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that when we arrived at the place where you had rescued Violet, we found the four villains dead, hanging from a large beech tree."

"I was surprised to hear it," I confess; but your friend Michael has forestalled you. He told me your whole journey—how you found them suspended—how there was a letter with a snake in it—how you could read it, and how he couldn't—how it told of my carrying off the maiden, and that the writer, who signs himself a Snake—I wonder if he ever heard of Lamias, or if he is one—promised to be your friend while he lived, and an enemy equally as long to Grif of the Bloody Hand. Ah! now I remember, he told me that he owed them bitter revenge for some deep wrong the devils had done him, and he intended to exterminate them—alone. I wish him success, but I am afraid he has a long task before him."

"I am inclined to think he will be successful—there is something so extraordinary in him; such a knowledge of all things transpiring round him, and such a fearful object to even think of working out singly, that I am led to believe he will execute what he has begun. I imagine him to be suffering some great sorrow; and as he has proved himself hitherto a friend, I will continue to think him one not to be lightly thrown away."

"I have made it a maxim to make friends of all I find worthy; those who have done me service, or likely to do me any—I do not mean by any base truckling, even if it were King Edward I wished for my friend—but by such conduct as make honourable men friends to each other. This stranger has proved a friend in need. You do well to consider him in that light, singular as he is, and to give heed to such advice as he may give you."

"I intend. In his missive, he put me on my guard respecting the sanguinary vengeance of Grif of the Bloody Hand; and as that wretch inflicted horrors, dreadful to remember, upon a village the other side of Tonbridge a short time since——"

"At Wrotham?"

"Yes."

"I heard of the affair—it was bloody and brutal. I would that I had known of it at the time. I have a score or so of lances at my command in the neighbourhood—if I had, they should have taught the devils better manners."

"That is coming to the point. I expect Grif will attempt a like terrible attack on this village. I should wish to render it abortive, and punish him for his villany; but this I fear cannot be done by those in the village unaided. A youth, who was a sufferer at Wrotham, has promised to bring a score of friends to help us; but we shall be obliged to wait a day or two for them, and I do not believe Grif will wait so long ere he attacks us. His object will be to take us by surprise, and murder all unrelentingly."

"The cut-throat bloodhound must be prevented."

"I hope so; but so much do I believe he will not rest till his revenge is satiated, that I almost expected him to attack last night."

"Last night?"

"Ay; but I suppose he could not make his arrangements in time; however, I saw one whom I believe to be a myrmidon of his watching this house last night, and it has made me more on the alert than I should perhaps be otherwise. What I have to ask of thee, Sir Walter, is, whether, to prevent the murderous determination of Grif proving successful, thou canst lend us the assistance of a few of thy brave lances?"

"Lend them? Bring them, man. I must have a brush with the black-muzzled rogues. At what hour will they be needed?"

"Not until dusk; and I should like their arrival in the village to be a profound secret."

"It shall be so. Ere the sun has sunk an hour, I will be with thee with some few hearts who fear neither man nor devil—fellows who would cut their way through a whole army, if it was required of them—at least they would try it."

"A thousand thanks. Now, Grif of the Bloody Hand, I defy thee."

"Aha! one thing suggests another. Now, I remember that devilish specimen of humanity expressed his intention of committing the rags of thy carcase—such were his words—after hewing it to shreds, to the flames of the village, which he expressed his determination of burning to the ground. By the mass! I am glad I remember that, for it confirms what thou hast only speculated. Soho! Tricksy, we will away for a few gallant friends, and then we will show the band some sport."

"Thou need'st no page to hold thy stirrup—I never saw a saddle more lightly vaulted into."

"Custom, good Wat—custom. I feel at home on Tricksy; and I believe he is never so happy as when he has my weight to carry. He is a staunch and tried friend—he does my bidding without grumbling at all times, and fares as I fare most contentedly—shares the hardships or the pleasures of life equally, and knows as well as if he were human the value of speed or of a stealthy footstep. No gold should purchase him from me, and it will be a sad hour when we are parted by death—for nothing else shall separate us, my bonny Tricksy. Well, I am off. Adieu until sunset."

"As you pass the wood, be careful you are not stopped and made prisoner by some of Grif's people."

"Never fear, Wat; they must have a nimble pair of heels who overtake me this morning; and as for their bolts—I am told I bear a charmed life—I have been among them when they have fallen round me as thick as hail, but was never wounded—therefore I do not fear their weapons. Commend me to the gentle Violet as kindly as thou thinkest fit. At sunset, or a little after, I will be with thee. Adieu."

As he uttered the farewell he galloped away, waving his hand salutingly to Wat, who stood watching him until he saw him, after passing through the village, enter the wood, and the thickly studded trees hid him from his sight.

"And why should I feel surprised or hurt that Violet loves him?" he muttered, as he turned to enter the house.

An hour subsequent to this, a hasty knocking at the outer door again brought him from the chamber of Halbert; and this time, in answer to the appeal, he admitted Michael, whose face exhibited such an extraordinary amount of something wonderful to communicate, that he almost expected to hear that the village was already attacked.

"How now, Michael!" he exclaimed; "what is the matter?"

"Ah! Wat, here you are!" was the answer; "expected I should find you here, although, to make sure, I ran to your mother's, and to——"

"Well, no matter for that, you have found me here. What have you to say?"

"You shall hear. This morning I was out early, and was going to the stream to try for some fish, when I met Sir Walter Manny. I stopped him, and we had a good long talk."

"Well, well, I know all that—he has been here."

"Oh! then he told you he met me."

"Yes, yes; but is this all you have to say?"

"All—ha, ha, ha! what an idea. Why, I have told you nothing—oh, I must tell you about Flora. When we left last night, away she ran, well—"

"Is what you have to say to me of any importance?"

"To be sure it is—of the greatest."

"Well then, tell me that first; I will hear what you have to say of Flora afterwards."

"How impatient you are this morning. Well, well, you shall hear it. First I met Sir Walter Manny, as I told you, and when I left him I hesitated whether I should go and fish or see if there was any signs in the wood of yesterday's fight,—by the bye, you have not given up their weapons."

"I know that; did I not say that if they had not been concerned in carrying off Violet they should be returned; but they were concerned, and so we kept them—or, shall keep them, for we had last night no opportunity of returning them if we had wished. And now to your important communication, without further digression."

"Very well; let me see, where was I? oh, ah, I recollect, in the wood—no, that is, I was going in the wood. Where are you going, Wat?"

"Why, up stairs, or in the wood too—or any where out of your company, if you mean to be thus roundabout in your tale."

"Pshaw! Wat, something has upset you this morning—you are not usually in this mood; you have quarrelled, I suppose, with Violet, about Sir—"

"If you intend to tell me anything, out with it at once."

"You shall have it as you wish. I went into the wood, met a queer-looking fellow in black, can't say where he sprung from, he was not there a minute before; 'You belong to Brenchley?' he said. 'Yes,' said I. 'You know one Wat Tyler?' said he. 'I should rather think I did,' said I. 'Well,' said he, 'away to him, and say the village is to be attacked to-night—'"

"To-night?"

"Yes, to-night.' 'Tell him,' said he, 'to muster all his friends, but to do it quietly and secretly, and be prepared for the devils when they come.' 'I will,' said I.

"Did he say at what hour the attack was to be made?"

"No; he disappeared almost as strangely as he had appeared, and I posted down here to find you."

"Said he nothing more?"

"No—yes, that is, he told me to tell you to meet him just up here at the beginning of the wood, about an hour before sunset; he had something to communicate to you; you were not to fail in coming, because it was on matters of importance he wished to see you."

"I shall not fail him. Do you know where Mark Grayling is to be met with?"

"Yes; down at the smiths'. He sat up all night on the watch. I called in there, and he had thrown himself upon some straw, and was fast asleep."

"Away to him, Michael, and tell him to summon such of his friends as are connected with the frightful affair at Wrotham—those who burn to revenge it; tell him to gather as many as he can, and let them be in the village by sunset; to let none know of their coming until they come, and bid them bring their stout blades with them, and the determination to resign them but with death."

"I will."

"Do it cautiously; draw him apart, so that none hear thee."

"But will you not tell all in the village; that they may be prepared?"

"No; because if any of Grif's men happen to be in the village, and find that we are prepared for the attack, they will inform Grif; he will put it off, and come at some other time suddenly upon us when we are unprepared. It will be time enough to tell all our friends in the village just before their coming; Grif will have advanced too far to retract, and then I am in hopes we shall crush him so effectually, neither he nor his cursed band will trouble us again."

"That seems very good reasoning—I will observe all the caution you wish. Hurrah! we'll tickle them up in style. I say, Wat, how Mark Grayling will lay about him in memory of his pretty little sweetheart. Poor fellow! how he will give it them, and how you will, and won't I, aha! Let Flora see to-night if of all her lovers there's one who can wield a sword better, or less afraid of its edge than I."

"No, nor one more worthy, more sincere, more true than thou, Michael, whether it be as lover or friend."

"Thank ye, Wat; I like to hear ye say that—not because I am vain or like to be flattered, but because I wish you to think me what I really wish to be. With Flora for my sweetheart, and you for my friend, what a happy fellow I may yet be. Ah, well! we shall see—but I am wasting time now—I will off to Mark Grayling. I know he will be off as quick as ever bolt flew, and I will get a lot of lads together who will strike hard and hearty for the welfare of Brenchley."

"Use all your caution in doing it, Michael."

"Never fear; I will be a pattern of discretion and speed. You shall see—aye, and something else besides; but that you shall acknowledge to-morrow. When I have done my bidding, where shall I meet with thee?"

"I will be at the cross in the village at sunset."

"Shall I not see you before?"

"I cannot tell for certainty. I shall perhaps be compelled by circumstances to be in many places during the day, and it is impossible to tell what time I shall be at any. If you should wish to see me, you must take your chance: I dare say I shall be in some part of the village, or at least not far away."

"Very well. If I should not see you in the interim, adieu till sunset."

"Adieu until then."

Michael grasped Wat's hand warmly, and they parted; Michael eager and earnest upon his errand, and Wat to his old situation by Halbert's couch. Another hour passed away, and Halbert awoke. Wat inquired of him kindly if his rest had not benefitted him.

"It has much, my dear young friend," he replied. "I feel weak, I acknowledge, but still I am better than I could expect to be under the circumstances."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"I believe thy kindness, good Wat. Where is Violet?"

"In her chamber."

"In her chamber? Ah! the sweet child watched by my side all night, did she not?"

"She wished very much to do so—I had great difficulty to persuade her from it; but she passed a sleepless night; over-excitement, fright, and fatigue, was the cause. The day had scarce dawned when she entered your apartments to know if you were awake, and to know how you were. I could see she had rested ill, and persuaded her to retire again to her chamber. I have every reason now to believe she is slumbering, and will awake quite refreshed and like herself again."

"Thou'rt very good, Wat—very good. I am to infer, then, that thou hast watched by my couch all night?"

"I felt a pleasure in seeing that you were not disturbed."

"Bless thee, my kind friend; I will reward thee one day for all thy kindness."

"Speak not of it, dear Halbert; you have done me more service than I can e'er repay—have taught me things good for my mind and future welfare I should perhaps never have known, and for which, do as I may, I can never return thee a full equivalent."

"I will not argue the point with thee, Wat, but act as if I had the best of the argument. Tell me, what is the reason of Violet's excitement, fright, and over-fatigue? what was also the reason of my meeting you in the wood with a party of village friends, all armed?"

"It is told in a few words. A scoundrel who visited you lately, one Martin du Bois, sought Grif of the Bloody Hand's aid to carry off Violet—"

"Ah! he did?—execrable wretch!"

"She was borne away. I met with one in the wood who told me the whole plot. I encountered Martin du Bois—attacked and disarmed him—and then bound him to a tree—"

"From which I released him."

"You?"

"Yes—but proceed with thy story: I will tell thee of that anon."

"With a party of villagers we followed on Violet's track, but Sir Walter Manny was fortunate enough to rescue her. We were returning when we encountered you, bleeding and faint, in the hands of a party of devils. It was this same Martin du Bois who wounded you?"

"It was. I was lured to Lamberhurst on false intelligence: returning, I heard his moans; I released him—recovered him from a swoon into which he had fallen, and was leading him home, when he stabbed me in the back with my own sword, which he had obtained from me by a base stratagem."

"Infernal villain!"

"I have little further recollection until I found myself restored to life by some people, who looked, in the red glare of torch-light, to be demons. Indeed, they were the devils belonging to Grif's band, and looked very terrible at that moment, although they were doing me kindly offices. There was a dreadful storm raging round us, and a tree close by was shivered by lightning. Some of those who surrounded me were struck down. I rose and staggered, I scarce knew whither. After wandering about, I fell in with some of the band, who seized me, and were dragging me along when thou and thy friends appeared to my assistance."

"Yesterday was an eventful day for all: it is passed, and I hope that its evil has passed with it."

"Amen! I feel very much refreshed after my sleep, and think myself well enough to quit my bed."

"Not to-day, at least; so much blood as you must have lost must necessarily have very much weakened you. The confinement to your bed of one day cannot be much, and as you will feel considerably better for the rest you will enjoy, let me persuade you to remain."

"I cannot help smiling, my kind Wat, at the earnest gravity of thy speech; and feeling that thy advice is much to the purpose—so much so, in truth, that I shall follow it."

"You are awake, dear father," cried Violet, entering the chamber suddenly. Approaching his pallet, she stooped down and kissed him. She made every affectionate inquiry her fondness could dictate, and then turned round with a smile to Wat, and held out both her hands to him, saying—

"I have had so sweet a sleep, Wat, that I feel quite well—even light-hearted, and all through your kindness. Do I not look as if I had?"

"I am very, very glad to say you do."

"But you look pale and harassed with watching; you will not refuse me now, if I ask you to retire. Will you?"

"I can refuse you nothing."

"Very well, then—away with you and have a fine sleep, and come back when you wake, as rosy-cheeked and as bright-eyed as ever."

"It is useless to say because I have sat here all night that I am rested. You will not credit me; so I will away, and will try to be as rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed—since you wish it—as I can."

"That's a dear, good Wat. I will watch now by my father's side, and shall not expect to see you until evening."

"We shall see. Good day, Halbert; when I come again I hope to find thee still better."

"Farewell, my dear Wat; I shall be glad to see thee as soon as thou canst come."

"I shall not be long away. Farewell, Violet—God bless thee! may you always look as happy—happier than now."

He hesitated when he got to the word happy, as if he doubted that she was so, and so he substituted the word happier, at which Violet dropped her eyes, and when she raised them again he was gone.

He passed through the village to his father's house, and was affectionately greeted as he entered—nay, almost overwhelmed with questions by a mother who doated upon him. He satisfied them to the best of his ability, and sought his chamber; he threw himself upon his bed, and in a few minutes was buried in a profound slumber. For three hours he slept undisturbedly, and then awaking, he arose, and having performed his ablutions with the clear water from a neighbouring spring, looked not nor felt as if he had recently undergone the slightest fatigue.

"Art away again, Wat?" cried his mother, as he prepared to leave the cottage.

"Even so, dear mother; it is an errand of importance that takes me away."

"I wish thou hadst no errands of importance—they are always taking thee abroad. We have little of thy company now, Wat; though, as thy parents, who love thee fondly, we ought to have the largest share."

"And so thou ought, dear mother, and so thou shouldst; but we should serve others before we serve

rselves, and it is only to do others service that I n more abroad than at home, and no other reason, thou knowest."

but I think it very selfish, and I should be loath to advise thee to follow it because it is just prudent—prudence is better learned by experience than precept,

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites. (Engraved by J. Wall.

"Well, well, my dear child, do as thou thinkest st; there is an old saying, 'light your own fire efore you give your wood to your neighbour,'

where there is no wildness of temper to restrain. Thou hast nothing wayward or wicked in thee, Wat, I know. God has been pleased to gift thee with

a strong mind, and a good friend to cultivate it; and how thou hast profited by the instruction is shown by the saying which I so often hear with pride, that Wat Tyler is the head youth of the village. I, therefore, feel less uneasiness when thou'rt away, because I am sure thou art not engaged in any dishonourable action, and most likely doing some one a good. It is better that thou shouldst be doing that, than be at thy mother's side, fond as she is of thee, sitting in idleness; so away upon thy errand, and when thou hast done it return and gladden our eyes by letting us see thee between us at the fireside."

"My dear mother, if ever son should love with the utmost devotion the beings who have brought him into the world, how dearly ought I to honour mine, and believe me I do; your confidence in me shall not be abused, nor your love unrequited; both you and my father have acted to me as sincere friends, as well as loving parents; and that, as Halbert Evesham styles it, is the judicious and proper application of a power which makes a member of society good or evil. You have implanted in me the seeds of virtue, and that embraces all that is honourable, good, and noble; Halbert has taught me how to value and use what you have planted, and God has given me the perception to understand what I have been taught. Whatever be my future fate, mother—and it may be that a short time hence will decide its inclining—thy first lessons and Halbert's tuition shall never be disgraced. I may be humble and lowly in station—a wanderer on the face of the earth, but, at least, no king shall be above me in the spotlessness of my honour. I shall find it easier to resign life than to part with my self-respect. So, dear mother, you may trust me, nor fear that, though out of thy sight, I am employed more dishonourably than if thou wert putting thy dear arm round my neck, parting my hair, and kissing me tenderly, as you did when I was a little child. Give me thy blessing, dear mother, and kiss me as of old you did, and offer up a prayer for the success of my undertaking, of which you shall know all in good time."

"Bless thee, my dear, dear child," sobbed his mother, affected to tears by his words, "thou hast ever been a good and dutiful son. May the holy and blessed Virgin shower her choicest gifts upon thee, and, whatever thy acts, intercede for thee at the last day, so that thou mayest enjoy eternal and unchanging happiness."

Wat fell upon his knees as his mother uttered these words, and bowed his head to receive the trembling hand laid upon it; and when she had concluded her benediction and he had responded "amen," he rose and folded her in his arms. She kissed him fervently, nay, enthusiastically, and with many kind words and blessings, uttered in an unsteady voice, he tore himself away.

"That throe is over," he said, as he walked swiftly along. "My poor mother! although I gave her the hint, little thinks that ere long seas may divide us. It will be a hard struggle for her, but it must be done—it must be done."

He uttered no more, but wended his way to a smith, whose forge stood near the outskirts of the village. When he reached it, he saw the smith and two assistants working with great briskness. This smith was a Saxon, who prided himself on having no cross of Norman blood in his veins—nothing but the pure Saxon blood, and possessed the same unalloyed hatred to the Normans which his forefathers had borne towards them in the time of the first William. As Wat reached the threshold of the shed in which his forge reared its roaring, fire-spouting head, the smith, who was a stalwart fellow, shouted in a deep-toned voice—

"Ah, my bonny Wat Tyler, I have been looking for thee, lad, with no little impatience. Here thou art at last; come in with thee."

"I am here, Leowulf, as thou sayest; but maugre thy impatience, all in good time, as thou wilt presently see."

"Thou'rt not, as thou wilt presently see. Is the news which the talkative, but honest Michael, brought here to Mark Grayling, true?"

"It is, but—"

"Never mind the buts—think of the weapons needful to repulse the rogues; the village is not half supplied with them, and we want somthing more than our bare hands to drive out the dogs with."

"You say truth. I fancied every man in Brenchley was supplied with a weapon of some description, and gave that subject no further thought."

"Ah, you are mistaken. It is true they may hunt up a weapon of some sort, but there is nothing for close quarters to equal a good sword; and, next to that, a stout spear. Now, to the best of my belief, our friends in the village are but poorly supplied with swords and spears, while the 'devils' are well furnished in all those things. I have a lot of swords and spearheads by me, which I only waited your appearance to furbish up, because I can depend on your word; and my friend Michael, though honest and well-meaning, too often makes a sword of a dagger—you understand."

"His intelligence is true; the authority is undoubted. Grif assuredly means to attack us to-night, and we must employ every exertion to crush his attempt at once; we don't wish to lose any of our friends, and the quicker we defeat him the smaller will be our loss. I therefore thought it advisable that there should appear as little sign of preparation as might be, in case any of his spies should be roaming about, and betray our knowledge of his design. I cautioned Michael to this effect, and doubtless his ambiguity led you to be incredulous of his statement."

"It did somewhat, I confess, for he said and unsaid, shook his head, and looked so mightily mysterious, that I really believed, after all, there was nothing in his news. Work away, lads! there'll be sport for you to-night, after your day's labour."

"Hurrah!" cried the men, making the anvil resound with their hammers.

"You see, Wat, you were scarce in time, as I said," exclaimed Leowulf.

"Not according to this new view of the question, I admit," replied Wat; "still, with a little assistance, you may soon make up the hour or so's loss."

"So we may; therefore do you finish what I am about—this breast-plate; it is nearly done, and will not take thee long. Ah, Wat, you ought to have been a smith; the many hours you have stood at my anvil, and learned to fashion blades and spearheads, armour, mail or plate, to a perfection which I, the years I have worked at the honourable craft, have scarce reached. You ought to have—nay, ought to be a smith. I will venture to say, you would be such an one as the world never equalled."

"You flatter, Leowulf."

"Not I, by the soul of my blessed forefathers, all good Saxons and true."

"Well, if ever I follow a handicraft, it shall be a smith's; for I love to fashion the various implements of war, from a dagger to a buckler."

"I know thou dost, and thou hast, too. Well, time will show what thou wilt be. I will get to work fitting spearheads upon staffs, of which I have a large bundle."

"Where is Mark Grayling?" asked Wat, commencing his work.

"Far away from here. No sooner did Michael deliver his message than he was up and away. Poor Mark! poor Mark! the lad's distraught with grief. He was very fond of the little girl these hell-hounds slaughtered, and her loss has gone nigh to break his heart. Now a pestilence light on me, but I will give an extra hard cut or two for poor Mark's sake."

"Poor fellow! I can well understand what he feels; but, as far as I am concerned, he shall not go unrevenged."

"If you serve this Grif of the Bloody Hand to-night as you did yesterday, take care you pick out a hard place for his head to come in contact with. By the holy apostles, Wat, I did not think the so strong i' the arm."

"I was myself surprised; but then I had the advantage of a firm hold of his throat, and my hard squeeeze paralysed his strength."

"By the smith's god, Vulcan! but his life nearly slipped out of his mouth. It was a strong hand and arm that could do it."

Wat left Leowulf, and visited such others in the village whose aid it was important to obtain. He did not yet know the hour of attack, but guessed it would not be until the sun had sunk; there would be darkness for two hours then, because the moon did not rise until late, and that was the time he expected Grif would commence the attack. He made all his arrangements in conjunction with his friends for this, and when they were all satisfactorily concluded, he sought the wood to meet the stranger, in accordance with the appointment made to him by Michael.

He gained the spot named for their meeting, and after looking round him with the closest scrutiny, he found himself still alone—the stranger had not arrived. He placed his back against a tree, and leaning his face upon his spear, he looked upon the village in which he had passed so many happy hours. It was sunset, the "glorious orb of day" was just sinking below the horizon, and the whole village and landscape seemed sunk into a calm repose. The village itself, with its small white buildings decked with trees, looked the abode of peace and sweet content; beyond it, as far as the eye could see, stretched away the landscape, a mass of luxuriant woods and fields, hills and dales, tinted here and there with the rich, golden glow of the setting sun. It was a beautiful sight, seen at a delightful time, when the quiet air, whose stillness is unbroken by any sound, save the occasional note of a bird, the rustle of the leaves, or the murmuring of some little stream winding near, sheds such saddening influence upon the spirits—the time, when, looking upon the face of nature, studded with trees and streams, hills and valleys, old memories rush back, making us live over again a period when sorrow and care were things to come. The quietness which reigned around gave a solemnity to the feelings which Wat experienced most forcibly. He looked upon the village with earnest eyes as if he had never viewed it before, although he had stood in the same place many hundred times and looked upon what he was now gazing on. But, perhaps, there was good reason for the steadfastness of his gaze, and the mournfulness of his aspect; the words he uttered, speaking unconsciously aloud, afforded some clue.

"How placid and sweet the little place looks in this calm hour," he exclaimed; "there seems to be no life in it, all is still and quiet, and yet, some two hours hence, that peaceful spot will be the scene of discord and disorder, broil and bloodshed; such is human nature, too—the breast which one hour is contented, peaceful, and happy, may, the next, burn with the fiercest emotions. It is a pity there should be a necessity for all this—there must be one, or the evil would not exist; yet I cannot see the need or utility of such a necessity; but then, our powers are limited, and it follows not because I cannot see the use, that a use, therefore, should not exist. Dear Brenchley! the home of my childhood, the dwelling-place of my infant days, the sweet spot wherein I have spent so many griefless, laughing hours, I must leave ye, perhaps for ever! Aye, 'tis a hard word to say, harder to do; but were it possessed of thrice its difficulty, I would do it. I cannot stay now, it would be madness—I could not bear it; my poor mother will weep to lose me, and for a time will not be comforted; and my father will grieve, but not so much—for he says we should all battle with the world in youth; he did when young, and why should not I? and if I escape with life this night, I will. The tears my mother will shed—for where I am concerned she is very weak—time will dry up, and she will grow cheerful again; and Violet—Violet, too, she will, I think, miss me. Dear, dear Violet, she would barter her future happiness, I can see, to save me a pang. No, it shall never be. No, Violet, loving you as I do—ah! who can love you better—even so well? It shall never be said that I sacrificed your feelings to spare mine—thou beloved! Now could I think myself a girl, a weak girl, for I feel as if I could shed a flood of tears; my chest swells and burns, and my throat aches. Pshaw! I am blinded with water—I am a fool—a fool. Why should Violet love me?—for what? What is there in me—in me, but one remove from a village boor, in comparison with—with him—that she should not give her heart to him? Why should I grieve, and feel pained and hurt that she loves him? and yet I do—oh God!—I do most agonisingly. But I am a fool to think thus; and what right have I to expect more than I have already received—a sister's love? Why should I fret and vex? will she not be to me what she always has been? Well, what have I done to expect more? Nothing! Fate threw us together, little children; I liked her—loved her, and did my best to do her service, because I loved her. In how many thousand little ways has she not repaid me; and yet, indeed, I must expect that she must give heart wholly and solely to me—to me! Pshaw! I am mad—would that I were—would I were, and could forget all this. I, who thought myself possessed of a strong mind, too, to give way thus? Foh! I am weak, miserably weak, and tis better I should go far away—far, far away. 'Tis of no use—I cannot master my agony. Oh Violet, Violet! had I loved you less, I had expected—hoped less; but, strive as I will, I cannot keep this bitterness down—it will struggle forth—so I will join the army and go abroad. A stirring life—or, what will be better, a stray bolt may make me forget it all. It will be better to go. I could not affect a cheerfulness I did not feel; and if Violet should see me—the fool I should perhaps make myself—she would be wretched, and, perhaps—I know her gentle nature—would forego her own wishes, and make me forget what is due to stern honour and justice. For, were she to offer me her hand, God help me, I fear I have not virtue enough to refuse that to which I have no right—which would be doing a wrong—to make mine, and, therefore, it will be better to go away, to quit the village and her whom, for years, I have companioned with such unmixed joy—for ever—for ever. The change is tremendous—the prospect, a gloomy cloud I do not even desire to

penetrate—there will then be nothing in the wide world to care for. Well, be it so—I shall not be the only one who stands alone in this wide world. Farewell, my old companions, my old familiar places, where I have so often sat me down in joy—farewell, all that I now gaze on!—Ah, by heaven! that is Violet at the door of her father's dwelling; though but a speck, I know her—the beating of my heart tells me it is her. She moves—she is gone! It is the type of our connection. She is gone from me for ever—she is gone——Pshaw! tears again—'tis over! Dear Violet, thou who holdest, and ever will hold my heart when I am far from thee, and there are others round thee, and thou'rt the—bah! why should my throat swell at the word?—the wife of him, and move in a station far above mine—if thou wilt think sometimes of thy old playmate, him who would cheerfully die to save thee from aught of ill, he will bear his exile patiently—if without gaiety, still patiently. Ugh! I am talking as if I were the maudlin victim of some dire oppression. My eyes are filled with water, too! I am a fool. Well, 'tis well Violet sees me not thus; I would not have the sting of causing her to suffer anguish upon my conscience for hoards of wealth—ha!"

This sudden exclamation was caused by feeling a hand laid lightly upon his shoulder, and turning hastily round, he encountered the stranger, accoutred as when Martin was stayed by him. Wat started to see him thus strangely habited, but he placed his finger upon his lip, and said hurriedly—

"Not a word, as you value your life. Quick, follow me with all the speed you can employ. Grif and his men are close on the spot, prowling; if they fall in with you, your certain death will be the inevitable consequence. Quick, quick, follow me—not a word—follow me."

Wat, roused with the rapidity and earnestness of the appeal from the listlessness his fit of thought had occasioned in him, followed the stranger's footsteps with as much swiftness as he could, and he had need of using it to keep pace with his mysterious conductor, who, after winding some distance, stopped, and motioned Wat to do the same, which he complied with; he then sunk down, and crawling into some brushwood, disappeared. Wat, as he stood alone, suddenly heard voices in loud and angry contention, and while he was yet wondering what it could mean, the stranger appeared again, and beckoned to him to approach closely, which, when he had done, was followed by his whispering—

"Follow me, but make no noise; you shall see something which may surprise you."

Wat went on his hands and knees, and, imitating the stranger, crawled among the brushwood. When they had twisted a little way, although Wat was surprised to see that the thicket extended some distance, the stranger laid his hand upon him, and pointed to a small opening, through which he motioned our hero to look. What was his surprise on obeying, to see that it looked into a glade, where stood Grif, surrounded by a large number of his swarthy villains, raging and storming at the sight of one of his men hanging upon a tree; a deep gash in his side showed that he had been stabbed with great force. Wat heard Grif roar—

"I will find it out; there's some treachery among us, an enemy in the camp, and if I discover him, he shall suffer hell's tortures."

"See," cried one of the men, "there's a snake crawling about his neck."

Wat started, but his conductor held him firm.

"I see," exclaimed Grif, "it is that which makes me sure it is done by some one among us. Belitre, Growl, Quintal, and Luc had each one round their necks when discovered hanging; Scélerat, who was last night murdered, had one upon him; and now here is one crawling upon Pierre Montserrat. There must be some enemy among us; but let him be secret as the grave, I'll find him out; and if I do, his death shall be horrible. Cut down the body and bury it. Has any one met with Martin du Bois?"

No answer was returned.

"Cursed idiot! where has he hidden himself? I shall be compelled to attack as I first intended, if he comes not. Some of you separate, and try to discover him; if you meet with him, bring him to me direct—I shall be at the rendezvous."

Half a dozen of his men went in search of Martin, and Grif, with the remainder, after the body had been cut down, quitted the glade; it was quite dusk, and they were soon hidden from sight. When the last had disappeared, Wat turned to his mysterious friend and said—

"What is the meaning of this?"

"The real meaning you shall know some other time; it is too long a story to tell now, and the time is fast approaching when you must be at your post, ready for action; it is enough to tell you that he who was hanging there had been in the village, by some means had ascertained your knowledge of the intended attack, and was on his way to Grif to tell what he had learned, when he was met, questioned, this fact discovered, and then punished as you saw."

"By whom?"

"It matters not now. It was intended that Violet should be carried off in the melee, and placed in the hands of Martin du Bois."

"The hound!"

"But I have him safe, and shall keep him so; if he does not die of fright before morning, he has stronger nerves than I count upon."

"Where is he? send me to him. I have an account to settle with him, which must be paid; he escaped the fate I yesterday designed for him—I will take care, the next time he is in my power, that he shall have no chance of being so fortunate."

"Never heed him—he is safe. Fear not that he will elude a vengeance which is in store for him and those to whom he is allied by ties of blood; they are doomed, and will not escape. Now, to your own affairs. I place dependence on thee, for, young as thou art, I can easily see thou'rt the master-mind of the village."

"You mean Halbert Evesham. He is—"

"No, he is not—at least in the view I am now taking of your relative situations and uses. In feats of strength, agility, and exercise of weapons, there are none who surpass thee in the village."

"Why, I think—nay, I have tried—and have always as yet proved the conqueror."

"And the villagers will follow where you lead?'

"Yesterday's proceedings will answer the question."

"Very well. Then thou'rt thus far the master-mind of the village, and I can depend on thee for the conducting the work of defence to-night?"

"I think you may. Know you at what time the attack is purposed?"

"I do. Two hours after sun-down."

"That is well."

"And the attack is to be made on the south-west. Halbert Evesham's dwelling is to be first attacked by a few, and their success in gaining admission is to be the signal of the commencement of the attack on the village."

"They shall not easily gain an admission."

"Leave that to me; I will be there."

"You!"

"Aye, think you I would be absent? I—I—who—but we waste time. I will borrow a few stout hearts from you, and, trust me, they shall not succeed there. My work shall be done quickly and surely."

"I would rather be there—much rather save Halbert's house. I can post my friends so as to meet Grif's attack, and stand it bravely, until I have saved Violet—Halbert's house, I mean—and then I will join them."

"Fear not for Violet. As soon shall this forest be swept away at a breath, or I forego my revenge, as she suffer harm. Be sure that she will be certainly and scathelessly secure; I will perish before she is touched, and I have too much to perform to die yet. Give up this point. I can understand the greatness of your desire, but, for the safety of many, forego it; your presence and all your energy will be needed for the attack, which will be led on by Grif, whose numbers double yours. You know not also the terrible effects of his first charge. He has been a soldier, and has made use of his knowledge of warfare in strictly disciplining his men to enact certain military evolutions which rarely fail of success. You must oppose him by stratagem rather than by force, consequently the energy of a strong mind will be needed to keep in force such movements as may be necessary to repulse the first attack and meet the second; for Grif, although he may be at first surprised to meet with resistance where he expected none, will not waste time in indulging in it, but re-form his men, and advance again with the determination of crushing you at a blow; and, if there is no acknowledged leader to meet it, your fate will be sealed; therefore, the necessity of others' safety must induce you to give up a desire which, though laudable, may be, if pursued, the consequence of much bloodshed and misfortune. And again I assure you, by all that is holy, while I have life, this night no harm shall reach the maiden, whom I have cause strong enough, if you knew all, to preserve."

"I will be guided by you, much as it runs counter to my inclination. But I think you underrate our strength: a friend, one Mark Grayling, quitted the village this morning, to bring a score of trusty stout hearts to aid us sufferers at Wrotham, himself one of the deepest. They swear to be revenged, or perish; they will not budge an inch. Besides, Sir Walter Manny, at my instigation, ere I received thy message, left me to gather a band of his lances, whom he will bring to our assistance an hour after sunset."

"Is this so—is this so?" cried the stranger, eagerly.

"It is."

"Hell-hounds, fiends, bloodthirsty, butchering devils! this night shall make thee atone in part for what thou hast done to me—ha! ha! ha! Oh, Almighty God! how I have prayed to thee for an opportunity like this! and now, in deep thankfulness of heart, I bless you for thus granting my prayer," burst forth the stranger in tones of deep excitement; and then addressing Wat, who stood in mute wonder at this display of exultation, said, "For thy news, good youth, I will give up my intention of defending Evesham's dwelling; thou shalt have that pleasure, for such I know it will be to thee; all I ask of thee is, to obey my instructions; and I will so arrange my friends, that Grif shall not have the best of the first charge, and much the worst of the second. Now, Wat, away; I will join thee at the back of Halbert's dwelling, and instruct thee what to do; the time approaches, the sun has sunk below the horizon, and in a short time Grif will be on his way to the village. Thou'rt sure of thy friend Grayling, and of Sir Walter Manny?"

"Of Mark Grayling I am certain; I would answer for him with my life. Sir Walter Manny has passed his word that he will come—I believe he never breaks it."

"It is enough! lose no time, but away; preserve all thy caution, let not a man show himself, nor a light be visible, until the appointed time."

"I shall observe. But I have one or two more questions to ask, and then I will speed to my post: you will oblige me greatly by answering them."

"Quick, then, propose them: if I can answer them I will."

"Thou didst tell me the story of Halbert's life—"

"Well, well!"

"But not who the parents of Violet were. Will you tell me now?"

"I have that yet to learn; but it shall not be long ere I do know. Thou canst little guess how deeply I am interested in the discovery: some day you may know all, who and what I am, and why I affect this mystery; but the time has not arrived for the disclosure, and until it does, the secret must remain locked in my own breast."

"Will you grant me permission to tell Violet all you have told me?"

"Ha!—why do you wish that?"

"It is her own wish; she suffers much melancholy from the state of incertitude she is in respecting her parentage. I have promised her I would tell her all I had gathered from you, if you released me from my pledge of secresy."

"Poor girl—poor girl! It were perhaps better that she knew nothing; her suspense and uncertainty would be increased were she to know what I have told you; speculations and expectations would arise which would be far from the truth, and conflicting doubts would occupy her mind more than ever. It is better not—it is better not."

"But she is aware that I know more than she does, and will take it as an unkindness in me if I do not tell her. I wonder Halbert himself has never told her as much as I have learned from you."

"He could not tell her what he never—never—"

"What?"

"Never mentioned to a living being."

"Then how came you to know it?"

"That is of no import—it is enough I do know it. You may use your own discretion in telling Violet; if it will afford her any pleasure, tell it to her, and say that she shall know more in good time; but if you think as I do, you may keep silence, and perhaps spare her much pain. Have you more to ask?—nay, I had forgotten, there is not time—the delay of a minute may prove fatal. Away, meet your friends, secrete them at the point Grif will attack, and then hasten to Halbert's residence. I will meet thee there, and conclude such dispositions of defence as may be necessary. It is now starlight; away with thee, and be ready, even should Grif alter his intention, and attack an hour earlier. You heard him say that he had changed his plan, but that Martin's absence would prevent him adopting the new idea; he may perhaps avail himself of part of it, and whatever it may be, we must be prepared to meet it. Tarry no longer, but away."

"I will do thy bidding to the letter. I am gone—farewell."

As Wat concluded he was about departing with rapidity, but the stranger stopped him hastily.

"I had forgotten that some of Grif's men are on

the search for Martin du Bois, and may fall in with thee. It is a chance, but this is no time to throw chances away; follow me."

Wat obeyed, but with difficulty, being scarce able to keep the stranger in sight; however, by dint of exerting himself, and persevering, he succeeded, and in a short time he found himself on the borders of the wood, at some distance from the place where he entered.

"There is little danger now of your being seen," said the stranger; "make the best of thy way."

"You shall see," ejaculated Wat, and darted swiftly but cautiously, in the direction of the village.

"He is a noble specimen of human nature," uttered the stranger musingly, gazing after the dark figure of Wat as it glided rapidly along: "if he is not blighted in his hopes as I have been, he should make one at whom men will wonder. God keep him from such a fate as mine!" and so saying, he turned away, and slowly entered into the wood.

CHAPTER XII.

"The lately ambush'd foes appear,
And issuing from the grove, advance."
The Giaour.—BYRON.

"Hemmed in—cut off—cleft down—and trampled o'er;
But each strikes singly, silently, and home,
* * * *
Till the blade glimmers in the grasp of death!"
The Corsair.—BYRON.

"Nerve thy gentle heart,
This hour again—but not for long—we part.
* * * *
And this thy comfort, that when next we meet,
Security shall make repose more sweet.
* * * *
One kiss—one more—another—oh! adieu!
She rose—she sprung—she clung to his embrace,
Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face."
IBID.

"They waited but a leader, and they found
One to their cause inseparably bound;
By circumstance compelled to plunge again,
In self-defence, amidst the strife of men.
Cut off by some mysterious fate from those
Whom birth and nature meant not for his foes."
Lara.—BYRON.

THE distance between the wood and the village was speedily passed over by Wat, who, casting a steadfast glance at Halbert Evesham's abode, to see that all was quiet, and still, and safe, made his swift way to the Saxon smithy. The place was closed, there was no sign of any living being near; he was somewhat disappointed, but judged that he had outstaid his time in the wood, and Leowulf with his friends had gone to the cross, as agreed upon, to await his coming. He lost no time in reflection; the suggestion no sooner presented itself than he acted upon it, directing his steps as rapidly as heretofore to the place of meeting. As he glided past each dwelling, he noted how profoundly silent they were, and looked upon it as a symbol that those within were not unacquainted with what was to come; for it was rare, although "early to rest" was a maxim strictly adhered to, that at this hour sounds of merriment did not issue from one or other of the dwellings. No one crossed his path, and it was not until he had nearly reached the cross, that his quick eye detected a figure moving near him; he sprung towards it, and said in a low tone,—

"Who art thou?"

"Is that you, Wat?" was the questioning reply.

"Michael! where are our friends?"

"Oh! I am glad you are come; we have been waiting for you very anxiously."

"Has Mark Grayling arrived?"

"He has, and he says that he and his friends have had hard work to get here undetected by Grif."

"How many has he with him?"

"Nineteen; and he makes the twentieth. He is to be their leader. They form a little band, and they mean to stick by each other while one is left. 'Wrotham, and no quarter,' is their war-cry."

"Has Sir Walter Manny arrived?"

"Is he coming?"

"That answers my question. Where are our friends?"

"All lying about the Cross, waiting for your arrival to station themselves."

"How do they muster?"

"Like Brenchleyites. There is not one who can bear arms who is not here, ready to dispute with life every inch of ground."

"I am thinking the devils will find this place too hot for them."

"Ay; for once they will burn their fingers. They tasted what we did on their ground—they shall see what we can do on our own. Leowulf has got such a sword! it's more like a bar of iron with sharp edges than a sword; he swears that the steel cap is not made that can withstand it, and he means to prove it to-night."

"His metal is always of the best, and his heart is as true as his metal."

"Ay, there's plenty of mettle in him. What news from the wood?"

"I'll tell it to all; on with me to the Cross." As Wat concluded he hastened to the meeting-place, followed by Michael, and found in the shadow of a clump of elms growing there the assembled villagers. As he arrived, Leowulf and Mark Grayling advanced to meet him, and both in a breath asked the tidings, for they knew, through Michael, that he was to learn Grif's movements from a stranger who inhabited the wood.

"It will not be long ere we shall be struggling for defence of our homes," replied Wat. "Grif's intention is to begin his work at two hours after sundown, but he may commence earlier; therefore be ready for instant employment. The stranger, a man of mystery, but one who owes Grif and his people the deadliest hatred, will lead ye, and will sooner lay his bleeding corse at your feet than desert ye."

"What part do you take, young Wat?" inquired Leowulf.

"I have learned that another attempt is to be made to carry off Violet Evesham."

"Oh, oh!" laughed Leowulf; "is there anything else they'd like? I wonder one of them don't come and tuck the whole village under his belt, and walk away with it; that would settle the question at once: one is as easy as the other."

"I have no doubt they will find it so," exclaimed Wat. "A small party of devils are to attack Halbert's dwelling, while the larger number are to fall upon the village itself; I wish, therefore, to have half-a-dozen

stout companions with me to defend our friends Halbert and Violet, while the stranger will show ye what to do here. When we have defeated the vile attempt, then we will join thee, and lend our aid towards victory."

"Can you depend upon this stranger?" asked Mark.

"I will stake my life upon his faith!"

"It is enough. Here are twenty of us, Wat, who have sworn never to leave this place alive unless we drive out these monsters; which, if we succeed in doing, will not be until we have had bitter revenge for the wrongs they have done us."

"Wherever the fight is thickest, there will the stranger be. He has received some terrible wrong from Grif, and from what I have learned since I have known him, rest assured this night blood will flow wherever his footsteps come."

"He shall meet with devoted followers in us. Oh! Wat, I am sick at heart until I can do something to revenge the death of Alice."

"You will have an opportunity soon, but it will be hardly earned. Grif has considerably augmented the number of those who opposed us in the wood, and being well disciplined, we shall have all our work to do to conquer them; but I trust in the Holy Mother we shall do so."

"Victory or death, Wat! we conquer or perish. We lay our backs to the ground, and our faces skyward, or we cut the hell-hounds to pieces."

"Amen! Now, lads, keep you here hidden until the stranger comes among ye, and then do his bidding, with the strong assurance that his counsel will make ye victors. You know my service: who are the six who will accompany me? It will be desperate work, and let no one who has a second thought of life join me?"

"I am with you, Wat," cried Michael.

"And I,"—"And I,"—"And I," echoed a dozen voices.

"Thanks, friends, I only require six," said Wat, and chose them without making any invidious distinction.

"But I am to come," cried Michael, finding himself not one of the limited number.

"You will be of more service here," answered Wat.

"Not I. No, no, I'd much rather be with you."

"But it will be most dangerous work, Michael."

"So much the better—I shall like it the more."

"But I have chosen my six, and there is not one to be spared from the number here. The fury of Grif's first attack will need every one we can muster to repel it; and such a gallant heart as thine, Michael, will be of the greatest service, and can ill be spared at the present moment."

"Still, Wat, I would rather be with you—you ought to know why; besides, you had a right to choose me—I was the first to volunteer. One of the six will, perhaps, give up to me."

There was not a voice from the six villagers making the offer.

"You see, Michael," said Wat, "you must forego your wish; there is none of the number who has a less desire to accompany me than yourself."

"Very likely to you, but very doubtful to me. Why can't you have seven?"

"There are seven already—I make the seventh."

"Well, then, why should not the number be eight?"

"Because seven are quite sufficient, and it would be injustice to the villagers generally if we were to draw one more than was necessary from the number who are defending the village, and are scarce sufficient for that purpose, for the sake of rendering two members of it more secure."

"I dare say what you say is very right; but I take it very unkindly, Wat, that you should not have chosen me."

"I did not choose thee, because I knew thou wouldst be of more service here."

"Yes—but you ought in a moment to understand why I am so anxious; but you either don't or won't." He approached Wat, and whispered—"Flora is with Violet, and, somehow or other, it slipped from me to-day that the village is to be attacked, and she has gone to keep Violet company, for fear of her being frightened to death if she should be alone when all this fighting takes place."

"And Flora, I suppose, has told Violet all?"

"I have no doubt she has."

"Bah! 'twas very thoughtless of thee, Michael. I did not wish her to know aught of it."

"I guess you are annoyed and angry, but I could not help it; it slipped from my tongue in spite of my teeth. Never mind Wat, it is done, and can't now be undone; I am sorry for it, if that would do any good, but it won't; so, say no more about it. Flora is up there, and go I will, whether you admit me of your company or no; I must see that Flora is all safe,—not but what I am satisfied you would do all that could be done to ensure her safety, but I must *see* that she *is* safe: so, Wat, make a merit of necessity, and take me."

"Take you, forsooth! You tell me you will go, and I confess your reason is a very strong one; so, in consideration of Flora, why, you may e'en make one of us."

"Hurrah! I am entirely bound to you, Wat. Lads, I am with you."

"Stay," said Wat, "we must pursuade one of our friends to make room for you. Wilfred, you will give up your place to Michael?"

"I'd much rather not, Wat Tyler. I should like to strike a blow for the fair Violet; I hadn't much of a chance yesterday, and I wish very much to do so to-night."

"You would much oblige me."

"I believe it, or else I am sure you wouldn't ask me; but you would oblige me more by pursuading somebody else; here's Will Gray, now, will give up readily."

"Will he?" replied the youth alluded to. "I don't think he will."

"There is no time to bandy words now; since Wilfred refuses, and Will Grav also declines, which of you will do me the favour, obligation, or whatever you choose to consider it? One of you ought to remain. It is only out of a consideration, which, if you knew you would all acknowledge to be a weighty one, that I submit to one of ye being displaced to admit Michael; speak quickly lads, for our time is up."

"Well, I will," cried one, stepping forward "You have done me a great many services, Wat, and if you consider it one to give up, I shall be glad to render it you, to show I have not forgotten those I have received from you."

"Thank you, Guthrie, thank you! I shall not forget this," hastily exclaimed Wat.

"Nor I, Guthrie," exclaimed Michael, "you shall find—"

"Now, my little band, follow me," interrupted Wat. "Lie close here until the stranger comes, friends," he continued, addressing the villagers, "you will not have to wait long, and do his behest to the letter. He is one who knows his work, and how to do it. "Farewell, until I join you, if I am fortunate

enough to be unhurt; and may God grant us the victory."

"Amen!" responded many voices; and, waving his hand, he led his six friends swiftly but stealthily through the village, keeping in the shadow of the buildings; while those he left behind sank to the ground, like spirits vanishing in the darkness.

Halbert Evesham's dwelling was soon gained, and, having stationed his friends among a small cluster of trees growing near, after ascertaining that they were untenanted, then repaired to the back of the dwelling to meet the stranger. He stood in its deep shadow, and looked anxiously for the stranger, but he was not there. He waited with nervous impatience for a quarter of an hour, but still he had not come, and he grew almost alarmed. He began to fear some foul play, then he discarded the idea, imagined a thousand things, and rejected them as soon as imagined. Every sound was hushed in Halbert's dwelling, and, at length, he became uneasy at its stillness, conceived the thought that Violet, perhaps, was already carried off, and Halbert slain. This fancy took possession of him so strongly, that he was about to seek for admittance, either to confirm or dispel his fears, when he observed a dark figure advancing glidingly, with great swiftness, and in another minute it was at his side. It was the stranger.

"Wat Tyler?" he uttered rapidly, but in a very low voice.

"Ay, 'tis I," responded our hero.

"Where are your friends?"

"Posted in a clump of trees the other side of the cottage."

"And well armed?"

"Each with a sword and spear, save one, who, like myself, carries a two-handed sword."

"Have they daggers?"

"Yes; each one has a skean."

"And their courage?"

"I would not have you ask them that question—it would be dangerous."

"I am satisfied with your answer. I have just left the wood, and overheard the system to be pursued. Grif has assembled all his men, hard upon eighty, at the borders of the wood. He has been raging at the continued absence of Martin du Bois, and has, in consequence of his non-appearance, altered his plan. Eight devils are on their way here to carry off Violet, and place her in Grif's hands at once, in order to make her capture sure; and when he has her safe in his power, he then marches to attack the village, confident of success: and you must all fight desperately—it must be death or victory. It will be better to die fighting, than live to witness the horrors he purposes inflicting upon ye all."

"If unflinching courage, and determination to conquer or die, can defeat him, we shall this night be victors."

"I hope so. Now at once to the clump of trees. You must meet the devils as they come to the cottage. Just as they reach the trees, each one must spring out, and, seizing his man by the throat, bury his knife in his breast. There must be no signal of alarm given to Grif—they must all perish at one blow."

"We will do our best; but there are only six besides myself, making seven. There will be one left, and we must do our utmost to prevent his escape."

"I will make the eighth: it will render our object certain. Lead at once to the spot—cautiously, youth. There must not be a finger seen until the time arrives. Grif is all unconscious of your being in arms, and is hugging himself in his error. Sir Walter Manny, I gathered, was also seen on his way to Tonbridge; but was not attacked, as there were only two together when he was observed, and he was upon horseback, galloping at the top of his speed. Grif was glad also of his absence, and thinks nothing can now prevent him having his fill of bloodshed and rapine."

"He shall have his fill, but not in the way he expects."

"Not if I have the power this night of directing the success. To the covert—quick! or they will be upon us ere we can carry our intentions into effect."

They stole softly round the cottage, and mingled with their friends, who were concealed in the trees.

"Have you seen Flora?" demanded Michael, as they appeared.

"Hush! Michael, not so loud. No, I saw no one in the cottage."

"Where were they?"

"I did not enter; I merely waited at the back."

"What! all that time?"

"Yes, all that time."

"It was my fault," said the stranger; "but the reason of my delay is, that I waited for information, which will well repay the loss of time. Hark! here come the devils. Now, friends, out with your skeans—you need no other weapon. Utter not a word, as you value the safety of the village. Without a sound, but with all your strength and determination, spring out as these dogs arrive. Each seize his man, and stab him to the heart. The success of this act will decide, in a great measure, the fate of what is to follow. Keep close—not a breath. Here they come!"

Each one, as quickly and silently as he could, placed himself in a position to leap out without impediment, and waited, almost holding their breath, for the arrival of their foes, who, unconscious of the ambush, advanced unsuspectingly, but, to do them justice, with extraordinary speed and stealthiness. However, it availed them nothing. As they reached the cluster of trees, the stranger was the first to leap out and seize the foremost devil with the grip, and something of the growl of the tiger, and buried his long-bladed knife to the hilt in his heart. The man gave a convulsive bound, and the next moment fell upon the ground quite dead. The villagers, with all the determination, but with not quite so much of the expertness which the stranger exhibited, followed his example; and in less than a minute, so successful had been the stratagem, that the eight robbers lay dead upon the ground. The stranger laughed exultingly as he surveyed the bodies.

"'Twas well done, 'twas well done," he muttered, with evident gratification. "Perdition to their souls! may they hereafter endure what they have made me and others suffer here. The wretches you behold here," he added more loudly to Wat and his companions, who were looking on with a kind of shuddering surprise at their own success, and the stranger's undisguised exultation, "are some of those who were most brutal at Wrotham, and would have been this night so at Brenchley, had they not been thus suddenly cut off. All praise to the Almighty! they have been prevented. Let us now drag the carcases for the present among the trees, and then on to your friends assembled in the village."

"Suppose a second party should come to attack this dwelling, on finding the eight devils do not return," observed Wat; "unless we stay, there will be none to guard it."

"Fear not, the inmates of this cottage are safe now, so long as we keep Grif and his band at bay. He will stay for the arrival of these carrion with the maiden, until his impatience gets the better of his power of waiting, and then he will give up the attack

here for the greater one upon the village, believing that one success will involve the other; therefore rest easy upon that point, and to our work."

would in a few minutes follow them. Accompanied by Michael, who guessed his intention, and would not quit him, he approached the door of Halbert Evesham's

Drawn by W. H. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

He was obeyed; the bodies were dragged and concealed among the trees until the issue of the night was decided, and then Wat, bidding them on, said he

dwelling, and knocked gently; he received no answer, and knocked somewhat louder, with like success; he repeated his knocks, but without having any reply.

It was very strange, he thought, and Michael felt as if his hair was about to lift up his cap.

"Burst open the door," he suggested.

"It is very singular why we have no reply to our summons," ejaculated Wat, and speculated upon the propriety of following Michael's advice, when it struck him to call out Violet's name.

"Violet, Violet!" he exclaimed, but not loudly. He received no answer, but thought he heard some one moving, and rather earnestly continued, "This is I, Wat Tyler, who speaks."

"How are we to know that?" said a soft voice from the interior.

"Phew! that's all right," cried Michael. "Flora, it is I and Wat who want to come in; open the door quietly, there's a dear good girl. I began to fear you were dead, or run away with."

The door was at once unbarred, and they were admitted, Flora saying, laughingly,

"You need have had no fear of that; nobody would run away with me; nobody would have the trouble of me."

"I would, you know, Flora," said Michael, putting his arm round her waist.

"Oh, but you're nobody," she replied, disengaging herself.

"Very well, that's just fulfilling your words; for, if I am nobody, I would both run away with you, and have—as you call it, though I don't—the trouble of you."

"Where is Violet?" asked Wat.

"Up stairs with her foster-father, frightened almost out of her wits. We heard a great scuffling just now, and thought the horrid devils had come to burn or eat us up alive."

"I am sorry you told her anything respecting it," uttered Wat, rather gravely.

"I dare say, indeed! Pray, was it likely I should know the horrible news, and not tell it to Violet? Of course it was not; I was no true woman else: it might be all very well for you or Mic—no, not Michael—he is no great hand, like me, at keeping a secret; but it might be all very well for you, who have the wisdom of your grandfather under your cap, to say nothing about it; but, mercy upon me! it rolled and tossed and tumbled, and would pop out. There, now, was I to blame?"

"I cannot stay to argue the question. Tell Violet—"

"Will you not go up and see her?"

"No: it is better not now."

"Well, you are a strange fellow, Wat, for a lover; now, if any of mine"——

"This is no time, believe me, Flora, for jesting—when some half hour hence both Michael and I may be—that is—in danger"——

"My God! how pale you are, Flora," cried Michael, suddenly.

"Dead—dead—you meant that, Wat. Oh, do not say so—do not say so!" exclaimed Flora, almost gasping for breath.

"No, no, no!" returned Wat, quickly, "I meant danger—but of that not much. Do you, Flora, when we are gone, bar every door and window firmly; admit no one, on any pretence, save us; and not us until you are satisfied by our voices that you are not deceived: and in case at any time of this dwelling being attacked, a lighted torch in the topmost window will bring you aid. Do not fail in one tittle of this, for your lives and honour depend upon its strict observance. Farewell: commend me to Violet; tell her the last words I uttered beneath this roof was a prayer for her. Come along, Michael, we must away. Remember, Flora, what I have said."

"I will, I will. Oh Heaven! I thought not of our, or your situation; there is, I am sure, by what you have let fall, very great danger; be careful, do not be too hazardous, or we may never—never—see you again—alive." With a burst of tears she threw herself sobbing upon Michael's neck; he pressed her to his breast earnestly, and the water gushed to his eyes.

"God bless you, my own dear, dear, Flora," he uttered, "be not afraid—all will go well. We shall be back again, all safe, shan't we, Wat?"

"Yes, yes," answered Wat, hurriedly; "cheer up, Flora, cheer up, there is not so much danger as you suppose, we shall return unharmed, never fear; tell Violet so. Cheer thee, and cheer her—remember my instructions. God bless ye both. Come, Michael."

"God bless you, Flora, we shall soon be back gayer than ever," ejaculated Michael, still embracing Flora, and feeling no inclination whatever to alter his position.

"God bless you, Michael," she sobbed. Good bye—if—if—you should be—killed?—"

"Why then, Flora, I shall die with a heart which was unalterably, unchangeably yours; and if it beat a thousand years longer, its love would never decay or cease."

"I do believe you, Michael; and if ever I have been unmindful of your kindness, it was only that I was weak and giddy, and not that I loved you less."

"There spoke a generous heart. I am a fool for fancying a hundred things I have done, but if I live I never will again. The Holy Virgin's blessing upon thee, dear Flora; you will see me again, and have me to tease the same as ever. God bless thee."

He kissed her tenderly, and telling Wat he was ready, disengaged himself from Flora's arms, and followed our hero, as he heard him exclaim with intense fervour,—

"If I fall this night, and never—never—look again upon her with earthly eyes, do thou, Oh God shield her from all danger, all ill, now and for ever!"

"Amen!" cried Flora and Michael in a breath, for they knew he spoke of Violet.

Without another word he left the cottage, followed by Michael, who indulged in another embrace and one more kiss before he quitted Flora. They heard the door barred behind them as they left, and then inwardly resolving to do great deeds for the love of those they had just quitted, they hastened to join their friends. They used all the speed they could, they soon overtook the stranger and their five friends, and in a few minutes more were in the shadows of the trees among the villagers.

"How now, lads," exclaimed Leowulf, speaking cautiously, "what brings ye back so soon?"

"Because we have done our work up there," answered Wilfred.

"How mean ye?"

"'Tis quickly answered," said Wat Tyler, approaching him; "the men who were to have carried off Violet—they were eight in number—"

"Well?"

"They are dead!"

"Dead?—how?—when? We heard nothing."

"Nor was it necessary," said the stranger; "still they are dead—as I hope every member of the villanous crew will be soon. Ha! Grif's patience is very fleeting; he is already anxious to begin his murderous work. Wat, see you close to the large tree, standing upon you hill, aught different to that which daylight presents?"

"Yes, I see a large dark mass—a moving mass; they must be men there—nought else would take that form."

"It is Grif and his men," answered the stranger,

"I left them near there when I came here; he is marshalling his men to be in readiness to begin, immediately the expected arrival of his absent devils takes place."

"He will be disappointed," said Michael.

"On that point, and we must exert ourselves to make him so upon all others; he will not advance yet, but he will not be long; let us make the most of our time. How many are here assembled?"

"Fifty-seven" replied Leowulf.

"I would there had been more—Grif's men number nearly eighty; still, few as we are, determination and steady courage may win us the fight. If there are any here who would not sooner die than submit, let him at once quit; he will be of no use towards victory, and his example of submission may do us harm. I offer my life to your service; if the victory is not ours, I quit not the field alive, and I expect the same from those who fight with me."

"You will find twenty here," said Mark Grayling, "who have sworn to have a deep and fearful revenge—nothing less will satisfy them. I am one of them, and if I thought a want of nerve would make me quit the fight, leaving Grif of the Bloody Hand and his men victors, I would now bury my skean in my heart. Our cry is death or victory, and so shall it be—we give no quarter and take none."

"There are fifty-seven here who will conquer or die, Mark Grayling," said Leowulf, abruptly; "there's not a man among us who will not give up a few years rather than suffer, while a chance remains, the maintainers to overcome us."

"I doubt it not," said the stranger, hastily, being desirous to prevent any division of feeling, seeing that Leowulf was somewhat nettled at Mark's speech, though, poor fellow, he had no thought, in speaking of himself and his nineteen friends, of impugning the courage of the remaining thirty-seven. "I doubt it not, friend; now to our work; will you obey my directions?"

"We will," was the reply from all.

"Then do you, my good friend," he continued, addressing Leowulf, "in connection with Wat Tyler, take command of twenty friends; and you, good Mark Grayling, lead thy nineteen friends; I will myself take the command of the rest; I must tell those who fight with me, they will have the hottest work. Now, divide quickly, for we must station ourselves in different spots, and that at once; for ere long, that dark mass will be moving down the hill!"

"I fight with you, Wat" said Michael, approaching his side.

"With all my heart, Michael," rejoined Wat, "and let us try if we cannot this night win a name for dexterity in the use of our weapons. Quality must make up for quantity to-night, and if every man here believes that he has the work of two to do, and does his best to do it, the issue will be, that we shall clear our village of every rascal now approaching, and make them tenacious of again visiting us."

"You say well," exclaimed Leowulf, "I mean to try and shew them some pretty play; it shall go hard, but I, who have all my life been fashioning weapons, will shew these sad-vested dogs the use of them. Ho! ho! by my spout-fire forge! I never felt myself so strong i' the arm as now I do. Look you here, Wat, is a weapon that never did a shameful act, for it has never been out of my keeping; and by the pure blood which flows unmixed in my veins! 'tis a weapon which Richard of the Lion Heart, or even that noble spirit, Little John, of immortal memory, my great grandfather, honour to his soul! would never felt shame to have used. Ho! ho! my blood runs up and down in my veins, and my fingers touch the hilt as if there was talismanic virtue, a drawing power in it, and my heart beats wildly, making me long for the work; ho! my bonny five feet of bright fire-proved steel; we'll teach the Norman ruffians that a Saxon's hatred for their villanies carries death with it. Wat Tyler, my bonny lad and pupil, keep close to me, save the room I need for the swing of my arm, and play as I play; throw not a flourish nor a cut away, and when you strike spare yourself the trouble of a second blow. Your weapon is of unflawed metal, I forged it myself, and it will cut through a steel casque as if 'twere wrought of thin pine-wood. Now, Woden, the war-god of the Saxons, look down and grant us victory, or six foot of green-turfed earth!"

"Your words make my heart leap, Leowulf," cried Wat, with enthusiasm. "You shall find me this night not disgrace your tutoring."

"I am sure of it. Who are the nineteen lads who fight under Leowulf?"

"I am one," observed Michael, quietly. "I say, Wat, if Flora could only see us when we are hard at it—it would do her heart good, wouldn't it?"

"I am afraid not," replied Wat, and proceeded to collect from those assembled, the number over whom he was to have a half command: he chose those for himself and Leowulf upon whom he could least depend, leaving the stranger the steadiest and stoutest fellows; being well assured that he might control any show of weakness among those he had chosen, where the stranger would possess no influence; and, in a case where a moment's wavering might prove their destruction, he felt the full necessity of trusting nothing to chance. When the three bands were arranged, the stranger addressed them.

"Villagers of Brenchly," he commenced, "there is yet a few minutes allowed us ere we shall be mixed up in bloodshed and strife with those who are coming with the intent of slaughtering, plundering, and deeds far more monstrous; let me employ those few minutes in addressing you. I am a stranger to all here, save one, and with but a slight exception even to him. I cannot disclose my name unto you, but I can my purpose and the motives which actuate me, in order that you may place every dependence upon my undeviating determination to lend my life and aid in your cause to-night. A few words will explain my situation. I was once rich, in the possession of a happy home, and one—one, a gentle lovely being who made that home happy—who made my fireside a paradise. A few months had scarce blessed our union, when a demon in the shape of one who bore the title of noble—God! that those high in power on the earth should do deeds to make honest men shudder, and still be called noble! He!—a wretch for whom once I would have perilled life—all that made life worth living for—came like a snake to my dwelling, and by means most villanous, even force and violence, robbed me of my gentle wife. I was absent at the time, or I should not now be here to tell you this much. When I returned, it was to find myself a blighted, broken-hearted man; beggared of that wherein I thought myself most rich; blasted and withered I stood, with all that could have made me happy torn from my grasp—for ever; no hope—not a grain of hope left. I swore to be revenged—to be revenged to the fullest, furthest extent. I was not by nature vindictive; I had been given a mind and feelings which made me desire to promote the welfare of all, and ease them of oppression and hardships where they existed; loved quiet and peace, and would not have hurt in deed or thought a living thing. But this monstrous wrong changed my nature at once;

he worm which, kicked from its path, will still crawl on to be kicked again and again, and still crawl on, nor show that the blows have ruffled its enduring nature; but when trodden on 'twill turn and sting—and sting! I have been trodden upon, and my sting shall be deadly. I tracked, with the perseverance of a blood-hound on the scent, the authors of my misery. Grif I know to have been the one who carried out the villanous designs of him who planned the wrong done to me; through Grif will I work my vengance upon the scoundrel who has thus embittered every hour of my future existence. I have sworn this in an oath the most fearful, most binding, and I will carry it out or perish in the effort. I have spoken to you the truth, as I hope hereafter for mercy; and having said thus much, you will not fear to place entire confidence in one who, though personally unknown to you, is no less a staunch friend to your cause, and whose deeds shall prove the truth of his words. Will you trust me?"

"To the death!" cried Mark Grayling, energetically, for he could well sympathise with the stranger's motive for vengeance; and Mark's words found a ready response in all there assembled.

"I thank you. Believe me, your confidence is neither misplaced, nor shall it be abused. You have all seen that Grif's band have already suffered from one who has left his sign upon those who experienced his powers of retribution."

"What! the snake?" exclaimed Michael.

"The same," replied the stranger. "Wherever the fight is thickest, there shall be the snake seen, and by those who shall learn to fear it. Wherever it glitters, these will danger press; and let no man be idle while that is dancing to and fro. And now to the business of the moment. Grayling, I see your friends are armed with cross-bows as well as sword and spear."

"Each man; and with a store of bolts," replied Mark. "Each one prides himself upon being a good marksman; and when the bolts are gone, or no longer needed, there's not one who knows not good and proper use of both sword and spear."

"It is well. Then do thou and thy friends glide to yon cluster of elms; but let not one of ye be seen—such an act of indiscretion would destroy all. There take up your station. You must bend your bows and be in readiness, upon a signal you shall receive from me of a loud whistle, to pour forth a deadly discharge. Make every bolt tell, for on your first check of the devils depends more than you perhaps imagine. When you have discharged your bolts, wait not an instant—give them no time to recover their surprise, but pour forth flight after flight, as swiftly and dexterously as you can, until you have exhausted your stock of missiles: then to close quarters, with sword and spear. You will come upon them as a relay on our side, for we shall be in hard fight with them before your presence will be needed. I have no more to say, beyond entreating you not to give an inch, unless I may conceive a stratagem, and you hear my voice bidding ye do so. Away with ye, and God grant ye success!"

As he finished, Mark and his friends crept among the deep shadows of trees and houses, until they reached the spot allotted to them, and there took up their station, impatient to retaliate the wrongs which Grif of the Bloody Hand inflicted upon them at Wrotham. When they had departed, the stranger turned to Leowulf, and said—

"My good friend smith, I would have thee and thy friends advance stealthily to yon ridge rising up in front, some two hundred yards hence; the shadows fall so thick just now, that Grif can see nought on this side. When there, lay yourselves down flat until the devils are close upon you; then start up like spirits of vengeance, and at them. Give them no time; they will be already galled and surprised at the bolts of Grayling and his friends, and will not be recovered when you are hand to hand with them. They have not the motive for revenge, and determination to conquer or perish, which we have; and they will waver—they must do it: at that moment I will be among them. Then make desperate exertion; the darkness will hide the inferiority of our number from them, and I doubt not they will fly. Cut them down as they run—cut every hell-hound down, that they may not live to plot and enact fresh villanies. Ha!—quick—quick!—they are moving—"

"Ay, and quickly too," cried Wat. "To your cover, friends—to your cover!"

"Cautiously, or you will render our plan abortive. Away!—I will soon join you."

Leowulf, followed by Wat Tyler, Michael, and his friends, advanced to the ridge, crouching low to prevent being observed by the coming foe, and soon gained it. There laid they flat down, showing no sign of aught living being there; while the stranger and his little band, gliding round by the cross, took up his station to the left, and waited with breathless anxiety the approach of Grif of the Bloody Hand and his devils.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Forth on his fiery steed betimes he rode,
That scarcely prints the earth on which he trod;
At ease he seem'd, and, prancing o'er the plains,
Turn'd only to the grove his horse's reins—
The grove I named before."

DRYDEN.

"So, so: rub on and kiss the mistress.
How now, a kiss in fee farm?
* * * * *
I'll have my kiss, sir; lady, by your leave."

Troilus and Cressida.

"If she do chide, 'tis not to have you gone;
For why, the fools are mad if left alone.
Take no repulse whatever she doth say;
For 'Get you gone,' she doth not mean away."

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"Then let the trial come! and witness thou
If terror be upon me—if I shrink
To meet the storm, or faulter in my strength
When hardest it besets me."

ARKENSIDE.

"Farewell!—God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life."

Romeo and Juliet.

UPON quitting Wat Tyler, Sir Walter Manny galloped swiftly in the direction of Tonbridge, where he had fifty followers at his command—men who had been in many a hard-fought field, in all of which, from their dashing bravery, they had gathered laurels. They were all stalwart fellows, and would as soon have thought of doffing their cap and bending their knee to a serf, as fly defeated from a field of battle. They were a portion of a troop who bore Sir Walter Manny's flag, and were especially devoted to his service; who had fought under him in

all the battles in which he had been engaged, and had never been beaten. They were the pride of the army, as Sir Walter was the flower of chivalry; and in a battle, wherever he and his troopers appeared, they were sure, however near defeat were those whom they were advancing to assist, to turn the tide in their favour. There was not a troop in the whole army upon whom Edward so much depended, in cases of emergency, as Sir Walter Manny's; and it was a party of these bold fellows whom he was on his way to fetch to aid the villagers of Brenchley. As he pursued his way, his thoughts perpetually recurred to Violet and Wat Tyler; and still as he would endeavour to chase that vein of thinking from his mind, would it return with tenfold force. It was in vain that he tried to think seriously and continuously of other things; he could not manage it—Violet absorbed every thought. Finding this to be the case, and despairing of being able to divert his reflections into other channels, he gave himself up to them, and indulged freely in them.

"Violet, sweet Violet," he ejaculated, "by all that is beautiful and pure! no being ever claimed such hold of my heart as thou. Aye, and strive as I will, I cannot drive thee from my thoughts. I fear marvellously that I love her. Love her? well, yes, love her I am sure I do. I could not feel thus strangely if I did not. I would I had never seen her! yet, no, I wish not that—I want not that; but I wish right earnestly I had known she had already disposed of her heart to this same Wat Tyler. Heigho! he's a fortunate, happy fellow—must be. And she, too, the simple, innocent girl, to tell me Wat was to her only as a brother; a brother—ha! ha!—why she spoke of him with all the enthusiasm which a lover, talking of the one to whom he was devoted, would exhibit. A brother! would any sister look as she looked, speak as she spoke, even to changing the tone of her voice to one which thrilled through me—or sigh as she sighed, if speaking of a brother? Not she. No; Violet certainly loves him—aye, and that devoutly, too, whate'er she may think. Think?—yes, for she may not know that she loves him more than she would a brother who had been equally kind to her; but were there another Violet in the way, and he commenced acting with the same kindness to her which he has always lavished upon Violet, my life on't, she would not be long in discovering her love to be somewhat more than sisterly, and be vastly chagrined to find his affection brotherly. But there is no fear of that; Wat's love stops not at fraternal limits—not it: his acts tell differently, and there is no other conclusion to arrive at, but that they love each other tenderly and truly. Well, how stand I affected? By feeling thus dolorous, I scarce like to confess, even to myself, that I love her dearly—dearly—pshaw! that's not the word—distractedly—no, devotedly—aye, devotedly, and hoped, in addition to the earnest wish, that she would return my love; but now I must banish the idea—certes it is a harder task than I could have believed; natheless, I must do it, and I will—at least I will not interfere to cause a division between these two young hearts; for, albeit, I could wish fate had ordered it otherwise—that is in my favour—I cannot help acknowledging that they are well matched. The damsel is peerless—aye, peerless. I cannot say less; would I could say more, but it is as far as words will go; but that is not enough. However, to the fullest extent of the meaning of the word, is she bright and peerless; and the youth, I must confess, is a right gallant one; his person tall, and has the air of something noble in it. I have seen many a knight, baron, and noble, who boast of their lineage, who might be proud of his bearing. He is very handsome—he is certainly very handsome; and in his mind or deeds there is nothing mean or ignoble. If it be truth that he is five years my junior, then hath nature been most bountiful unto him; for certes he is a fine youth, and after myself, I could not wish Violet to love any but him. After myself—ho! ho! Well, it is truth. I would to Heaven she loved me, but she does not, so I will forget all—if I can—if I can, and I shall school myself to it, I am sure. Let me see—suppose, knowing what I know, that I should endeavour to estrange her affection from Wat Tyler, in order that she might transfer it to me, and suppose I succeeded, what would be the result? Um—Why, I should have the lady, certainly; but a divided heart, instead of one whole and unaffected by other than myself—a second love, with the remembrance of the first strong upon her—the first, the most absorbing, the most powerful, from whom she had turned unjustly—to use the kindest term: that would prevent her being happy, and I—I should have an incubus on my conscience which would eternally goad me. There would be the man living whom I was ashamed—nay, dared not look in the face—dared not—for evil acts make us cowards in the presence of virtuous men; and thus my selfishness would render three people completely unhappy for life; and I have marked out my course with far different intents. My name now, I defy denial, is bright and unstained by any deed bordering even upon that which is shameful; and shall I, to gratify a weak—no, Violet, my love for you I will not call a weakness—but shall I lose my own respect and my good name, sully my honour, because, loving one who is the brightest flower eye ever lighted upon on earth, I should seek, in defiance of all right or justice, to make her mine? No, it shall never be. I will not do her so great a wrong, whom I should in all things honour, and not honouring, stamp my love with worthlessness. No; love on, ye gentle hearts; I will not divide ye, nor be the cause, intentionally, of one moment's pain to thee. So perish the brightness of my honour, if I act otherwise! For thee, Violet, thou shalt dwell in this bosom the bright lady of my heart, undimmed by aught else. I devote my heart to thy service, will wear thy colours, though none shall know but I whose they are I bear; and worshipping thy memory with the most entire devoutness, do nought to cast a shade of dishonour upon thine image whilst in my heart it reigns—so help me, God!"

He placed his hands upon his breast, and turned his face skywards as he uttered the words with an intensity of fervent enthusiasm; then his head sank upon his breast, and for some distance he rode on utterly unconscious of everything around him. Once a tear disengaged itself from his eye-lid and rolled down his cheek; he dashed it hastily away with his fist, and then making a great struggle, for his chest heaved and fell, he shook his head proudly, and looked into the sunshine with the determination to conquer this tendency to abstraction.

"How steadily and soberly thou hast taken thy way, Tricksy," he exclaimed, with a forced gaiety; "thou hast been indulging in dreams of some future pleasures, I doubt not, or some visions of the busy-stirring past have been presenting themselves to thee, I would almost swear, but that it would not be exactly prudent. Come, come, my bonny comrade, mend thy lazy pace; shake off thy thoughts, and on with thee faster—faster."

The horse seemed quite to understand his words, as well as at once recognise his voice; it pricked up its ears as he spoke, then threw up its head elatedly, and changed an easy canter for a hand-gallop. At

this pace Sir Walter continued until he arrived at Tonbridge Castle, where he was staying upon a visit; he galloped into the court-yard after having crossed the draw-bridge, and dismounting, led his horse, waiving the assistance of half-a-dozen retainers, to a stable; he then groomed and fed him, and then, bathing his hands and face, he entered the castle, and sought the chamber in which were assembled the noble owner, his lady, a son and daughter. He was welcomed warmly as he appeared, and the Earl of Tonbridge, an elderly man, exclaimed mirthfully—

"Well, Sir Walter Manny, what new adventure, eh? Now, by the grace of manhood! I would wager a round sum of merks that there is much thou canst tell us which has transpired since thou didst yestermorn quit the castle. Some damsel, distressed and forlorn, rescued—some foul sprite or giant grim knocked i'the head—or some dangerous strait from which thy usual ability and courage have delivered thee. Come, thou must tell us thy news; I long to hear all about the sweet maiden saved from villanous and rude men, or whate'er else thou hast in thy budget."

"What maiden?" cried Sir Walter, starting, and wondering whether the old Earl alluded to Violet; and if he did, how he gained his knowledge.

"Oh, that is a question which thou must thyself resolve. I do not say thou didst rescue a maiden from danger; but I do say, if thou didst, I would gladly hear the history of your gallant deeds."

"If I were to tell thee, my good friend, that I had not met with any adventure since we parted, then I should speak falsely; but what I did meet with I care not to tire your patience by the recital. Let it suffice, that I passed through the wood, and had a little unfriendly intercourse with a few of the black rogues who infest it, and the storm induced me to take up my night's abode in a little village not far from hence."

"And was there no damsel in the case, Sir Walter?" asked the daughter of the Earl, with a very arch expression playing over exceedingly pretty features. Sir Walter felt himself getting very red, and the more he strove to conceal his confusion the more it increased.

"I confess," he stammered out; "that is—"

"No equivocation," cried the young lady, merrily, and pointing her finger towards him. "Beware of what you say. I see by your blushing—aye! you may laugh," she exclaimed, as the Earl and his son laughed loudly, "but he does! There's a colour! Now, Sir Walter, confess that there was a young damsel rescued by you yesterday."

"If it will please thee, I will confess as much most willingly," replied Sir Walter, recovering his embarrassment, which was only momentary.

"Nay, that will not do; because I know well, Sir Walter, that you would not confess as much if 'twere not true, even to please me."

"You pay me a handsome compliment, fair Agnes."

"I but speak the truth; and, were any one to deny it, you would regard them with a look fierce enough to make them believe you were about to swallow them. Now, Sir Walter, do you confess to the damsel?"

"Well, I suppose I must not be so rude as to decline answering a question from a fair lady, and one so fair as thee; therefore I do confess the damsel."

"I knew it—I knew it," laughed the Lady Agnes, clapping her hands gleefully. "That is at least honest, Sir Walter. Well, now you have confessed thus much, pray tell us the remainder, which, of course, is the most interesting.

"It is simply this. Passing through the wood, I by accident became acquainted with the situation of a young maiden, who was in the hands of four ruffians, who were hired to place her in the power of a designing scoundrel. I had the good fortune to get her out of their hands, and place her safely in the house from whence she was torn. In the village I remained, at the house of a hospitable inhabitant, and this morning I return to my good friends here. That is all."

"I suppose you mean by good fortune, in getting the distressed damsel out of their hands, that you laid about with your sword in right fierce style?" exclaimed the Earl.

"My sword was not idle," quietly replied Walter.

"A pretty interesting sort of affair, but rather common now," observed Agnes. "I am afraid that damsels wander about and fall into danger, in the hope that some brave adventurous knight, like you, will come and save them. Pray, was the maiden you rescued pretty?"

"Very! nay, lovely!"

"Oh! her eyes?"

"A most beautiful blue, and sweetly expressive."

"Indeed! she has no doubt a fair form?"

"Exceedingly; every limb is beautifully moulded, and every action is instinct with grace."

"And her lips—her lips, Sir Walter," cried the Earl, laughing, "you surely tried them. What says your experience of them?"

"Nothing more than in form they are faultless."

"Oh, Sir Walter, is that truth?" asked the Lady Agnes, looking archly.

"It is, by mine honour!"

"I wish I had been there," said the Earl's son; "by Venus, I would have had a kiss—I would have had a reward for the venture I had made!"

"You would not, Rupert, you would not," replied Sir Walter, quickly; "you would not have insulted one, because she was most lovely, whom you had saved from a dreadful fate; your honour would have have shielded her from such an indignity."

"Indignity and insult, Sir Walter Manny! 'tis no such insult for an Earl's son to kiss a peasant maiden," uttered Rupert, somewhat haughtily.

"It is, where it would be unwelcome; the difference of station makes the insult more gross. Were you a prince or a king's son, the insult would be greater, as you were greater, because you commit a wrong upon one whom you are bound by all the laws of knightly honour, no less than the feelings of manliness, to protect from wrong or shame; the virtue and delicacy of a female should not be offended more because she is the humble daughter even of a serf, than if she were a Princess Royal of England. I have vowed to God, that while I have life and strength I will preserve female honour from wrong or shame, and I will carry out my vow, whether she be gentle or simple, orpheline or blessed with parents; and she who is lowly and friendless shall receive as much courtesy and honour from me, as she who may be lofty or high in station—for she is no less a woman, and has an equal right—nay, a greater right to assistance and compassion unaccompanied by insult. Innocence and true delicacy is oftener to be found among the humble and the lowly, than among the high and mighty in the land; and it is unknightly to suppose that because the *accident of birth* has placed thee above thy fellow creatures, that it therefore gives thee the right to insult their feelings when it pleaseth thee to do so."

"You speak warmly, Sir Walter Manny," exclaimed Rupert, haughtily.

"I feel warmly upon the subject, Rupert; and will maintain that I speak truth against an army of con-

tradictors—and, if necessary, with my good sword. Think you a king's son has a right to insult your fair sister because he is a king's son? By the same rule which would govern you in such a case—for I know you would cut him down, if he dared offer one, were he an emperor—think you that you have a right to commit the same shameful act because you are an Earl's son, and the maiden who looks up to you for protection is a peasant's daughter?"

"You are right, Walter," exclaimed Rupert, tendering his hand, "you are right; I am glad to be i' thy company, for you will rid me of many vain notions of birth and state which I possess."

"It makes my heart glad to hear one so young advocate such noble conduct, Sir Walter," said the Earl. "We are Saxons, pure Saxons, and albeit we have not always been able to keep our broad lands, we have kept our honour unsullied under all changes, whether as rulers on this domain or when fugitives seeking shelter and food among the peasantry. As my forefathers ever found safety beneath a humble roof when they needed its protection, so now that fortune has removed their successors from its want, shall the humble have the full measure of their hospitality repaid them whenever they may need it; never beneath this roof, or in the world around it, meet from me, or—as they would value my blessing—my family, either contumely or oppression."

"I can well appreciate the truth of what you utter, my lord, and can at least say—so strongly has a love of what is just and honourable, and a scorn of that which is mean or contemptible, been implanted in me by my tutors, and the dictates of my own feelings—that if I thought otherwise, I should be the last man in Christendom to visit Tonbridge Castle; a dwelling where I have ever received the kindest welcome, the most marked attention, and where I feel proud at all times to find myself."

"If it is the intention of you gentlemen to continue complimenting each other, our lady mother and myself will walk in the garden until you have finished," said Agnes, playfully; "but before we go, let me beg in the humblest manner to question the gallantry which should make ye say all these fine things one to another, without dropping a crumb of your sweet sayings to the only ladies present."

"Believe me, fair Agnes," exclaimed Sir Walter, "that it was not a want of gallantry that left you unmentioned; for, if complimenting you would make you more lovely, more gentle, more charming in manner, more amiable in mind, more graceful in movement, I would exhaust invention in uttering the fairest praises, the prettiest speeches, and most gallant sayings, knight ever addressed to his ladye love."

"But as all you could say, with the aid of a most fertile imagination, would not add one little grain of beauty to my very humble stock of personal charms, you think it quite proper and right that they should drudge on, struggling to obtain a little notice, without putting out a friendly word to help them on their path. Oh! Sir Walter, you have made a sad mistake; your downright beauty—she whose charms, whose extreme loveliness, take your senses by storm—needs no compliment; she is so sure of her position, she needs no reminding of it; but where one like myself, who can boast of nothing more than that Nature was not exactly in an ill mood—but very indifferent—when she fashioned her, just seeing that the mouth was not awry, nor the eyes deviating from a straight path, nor the nose offensively large or long, or ridiculously small—where this is the case, then it is time to put forth compliment after compliment; and though I fully explain to you your duty, yet you see you keep silence to me, never giving me the slightest encouragement, nor instil into my head one idea to keep me from believing that I am a mistake of Nature, and have no right whatever upon the earth. Now, Sir Walter, I trust you feel very much abashed and very penitent after that severe reproof."

"Not I, 'faith; it does not touch me in any way."

"Not touch you! you can never be so obtuse as not to understand me?"

"Oh, no; obtuseness is no failing of mine—no."

"Pray speak without complimenting yourself so highly—give me some little chance."

"At least, I mean on that point;—will that meet your wishes? I do not compliment you, upon the very rule which you have so clearly stated; because, like the lady who 'takes your senses by storm,' you need them not."

"I am fairly caught. Pray, did the young damsel, whom, knight-errant like, you saved from danger, obtain a host of compliments from you to cheer her as you bore her homeward."

"Not one—not the shadow of one."

"Indeed! and yet report speaks of you, Sir Walter, as having a right ready tongue for fair speeches and gallant compliments for females; not that I have really found report to be exactly true, but yet I must acknowledge that it is not wholly false, and must imagine that there was great remissness on your part—that is, if you carried out an assertion made some few minutes since, which, if my recollection rightly serves, was—'And she who is lowly and friendless shall receive as much courtesy and honour from me as she who may be lofty or high in station, for she is no less a woman."

"You quote correctly; and I can fearlessly assert, that in her case I in no degree deviated from that principle; and the reason I paid her no compliments, fair Agnes, was the same which made your beauty find me to possess a silent tongue—she needed them not."

"Oh!" replied Agnes, making, with affected gravity, a low curtsey. "I confess," she added, "after all, Sir Walter, I do not dislike your mode of flattery; it is very unostentatious, but it is very penetrating; it is quickly understood and easily applied—by a woman. I am sure your distressed damsel must have thought so: did she not?"

"Craving your pardon, lady, the maiden I was so very fortunate as to rescue, appears much to interest you."

"Indeed she does, and you know little of a woman's heart if you thought otherwise. Do you not first infer that I am very lovely?—I say infer, which of course is very gratifying, until you tell me another lady is equally so. Now, if I have taken your senses by storm, so must this unknown fair one; but as two suns cannot shine in the same sky, two kings upon the same throne, or two ladies—that is, they ought not—reign in one heart, I naturally feel very anxious to know which has the advantage—it is a matter of much importance. There is no need to say that Sir Walter Manny is a most desirable personage to a lady, in every respect, mentally and personally, and I therefore have a great yearning to know whether my distressed damsel or I shall prevail."

"By the Mass! Agnes," cried Rupert, abruptly, "if Ulfred were here, and heard thee say as much, he would invite Sir Walter to a trip among the old trees about here, to decide which was the best swordsman."

"My cousin Ulfred hath no such weak-mindedness," exclaimed Agnes, blushing like scarlet.

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting with him yet," said Sir Walter, appearing not to notice the confusion which Agnes exhibited.

"He is a right gallant blade, I assure thee, Sir Walter," remarked the Earl, warmly; "an only son of a younger brother of mine, who was slain at the disastrous battle of Bannockburn; his mother, a young and lovely creature, died soon after in giving birth to Ulfred; I adopted him, and he has grown up a pride to us all."

"I am sorry he is not here," said Sir Walter.

"So is Agnes," observed Rupert, with a laugh.

"You are very foolish, Rupert," exclaimed Agnes, poutingly.

"He will be here anon; he has seen you, but never to speak to you; he fought in the battle of Halidon Hill—"

"He is a soldier?"

"He is, and one who has no reason to be ashamed of his deeds; we are all very much attached to him, and he to us; he is like a son to me; brought up with the family, and being all we could desire, it is natural that we should regard him with the strongest affection."

"I consider fortune very bountiful to me; she is perpetually throwing noble and worthy men in my way as friends—"

At this moment a low tap was given at the door; it gently opened—a very handsome manly face presented itself, and a voice said—

"I am not disturbing you, uncle?"

"Aha!" shouted Rupert, "here's Ulfred. Come along, Ulfred, we were just talking of you—nothing much in your favour—so it is as well you have come before we spoke against you."

"I do not fear that you will say harsh things of me while I am away, when you are always so kind to me when here."

"Don't be too sure; you would not say so if you had heard what Agnes said just now—would he Aggy?"

"You are very absurd," replied Agnes, smiling.

"I am satisfied my sweet cousin would say neither more nor less than she deemed my desert, either now or while away," said Ulfred, looking at her with a gaze which struck Sir Walter as placing them in the same position, respecting the brotherly and sisterly affection for each other, as that felt by Wat Tyler and Violet Evesham.

"Ulfred," exclaimed the Earl, "before you is our honoured guest, Sir Walter Manny, whom you have so long desired to meet."

The two young men grasped hands, and a single glance between them showed they understood each other in a moment.

"We have fought in the same field, on the same side, Sir Walter," said Ulfred, "but this is the first time I have been fortunate enough to grasp thy hand; let me hope that it is but the forerunner to much pleasant companionship."

"The fault shall not rest with me, if thy hopes are not fulfilled," exclaimed Sir Walter,—"that is, if fate throws us much together. There is stirring news from France; and as it is not the intention of Edward to remain inactive, there will be no staying in England for those who wear swords and possess the ambition to carve themselves a name. I have an inordinate love for an active life, and Edward, having some knowledge of it, has kindly promised to give me plenty to do; therefore, my good friend Ulfred, if your lot should be cast in the same direction as mine, we shall, I doubt not, companion merrily so long as the weapons of the enemy and the goodness of Providence spares our lives."

"I am already in close attendance upon the King," replied Ulfred; "and therefore he has the direction of my lot; but, if he will permit me, I will change my position for a post among the brave lances of Sir Walter Manny; and then, I trust, our mutual wish will be gratified."

"I shall feel proud to number you among my comrades," said Sir Walter, with warmth, as he scanned the noble figure of the young Saxon; "and doubt not but a word from me to Edward will effect the destined change. Still, should your services, in your present situation, be of too much importance for him to spare you, you may make your mind easy and happy that you will not be idle. There is sure to be some hard fighting soon; and you know, wherever there's fighting, there will be the gallant Edward."

"Make his mind easy and happy!" reiterated Agnes, looking vastly serious, and speaking rapidly; "I do not know what your ideas of ease and happiness are, but they appear to be the very reverse of mine. 'Hard fighting,' as you term it, seems little conducive, in my humble mind, to ease and happiness."

"Ay, but you forget, Aggy," said Rupert, "that you are a woman, and do not understand the pleasure, the delight, the enthusiastic excitement of fighting in a battle-field;—how should you, who never saw anything of the sort; but, to one who has been in the fray, there can be nothing more glorious than what he has seen and undergone,—the flashing of thousands of weapons, casques, breast-plates, lances, and swords; bolts and arrows flying as thick as hail, the war-cry repeated with deafening cheers from voice to voice; the crashing, the din, the dashing of the war-horses, the cries of the wounded, the shouts of the victorious, the neighing of the steeds, the shrill sound of the trumpets, and a thousand other noises mingling in one confused, but exciting uproar of sound—banners waving, soldiers advancing, retreating, fighting hand to hand, with the glorious uncertainty of not knowing whether you shall leave your bones to whiten in the sun, be made a prisoner, wounded,—but not broken in spirit, save by the capture,—or returning well and victorious amid the welcoming cheers of your countrymen."

"Ay, Master Rupert, you talk it well," rejoined Agnes, "and it seems very glorious; but I confess I cannot see the glory of being surrounded by a quantity of people bent upon taking your life, while you are striving with all your vigour to return the compliment. The uncertainty appears to me to be the very reason why you should be unhappy and uneasy. If you could go to battle and enjoy all the excitement which it seems this clamour and noise creates, without hurting any one or being hurt, why, then—"

"It would yield no pleasure whatever; and I, who never feel so 'easy and happy'—those are, I believe, the objectionable words—as when on my bonny war-horse, Tricksy, doing hard duty in a field of battle, would be the first to retire from the service, or the very last to enter," said Sir Walter Manny. "No, fair Agnes, Rupert is right. Added to the excitement—which in itself is great—of the roar of conflict, it is the uncertainty of your lot, whether you be struck down and turn your dying eyes upon the broad canopy of heaven, or whether you return to your friends to tell them the tale of the deeds you have seen enacted, and the part which, mentioned with all becoming modesty, you played in them."

"I bow, of course, to your experience, most grave counsellor," returned Agnes, somewhat archly. "Every one knows the part Sir Walter Manny has played in these dreadful affairs, and we will therefore spare his modesty the recital; at the same time confessing, that

no one has so great a right to give an opinion upon them as his redoubtable self."

"Nor any one so proud to emulate what he has

Rupert, quickly, "and shall be, too, for I have enlisted under Sir Walter's banner."

"You?" ejaculated Ulfred, surprisedly.

Drawn by H. W. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

done as one of his auditors, speaking for myself," exclaimed Ulfred.

"Not prouder than I should be, Ulfred."

"Even I—and why not?" said Rupert.

"I see why," answered Ulfred.

"by the surprise I felt on

hearing the news, and not that you should have determined upon throwing off your boy's clothing to take up the garments of a man. I am glad to hear of your intention, and likewise that you should begin under so able a master as Sir Walter."

"And so am I," exclaimed Rupert. "It shall go hard, too, but what I profit by his instructions."

"I am pleased to hear thee say so, Rupert," said the Earl, smiling gratifiedly, "and hope you will not forget what you now purpose."

"I shall find him an apt pupil, I have no doubt," said Sir Walter. "I feel honoured by your placing him under my care, and will do my best to make him, what I hope one day myself to be, a cavalier who has fought many hotly-contested fields, and lays himself down at last to die without spot or stain upon his honour or name."

"I have the most implicit faith in thee, Sir Walter," exclaimed the Earl, "and entrust him to thy guidance with the full conviction that, while under thy influence, our name, which never yet was sullied, will remain unstained. I have the greatest confidence, too, in him; but if he should do aught to stain his honour and bring disgrace upon a name given unblemished to him, remember us not, but cut him down without remorse or mercy, for he will be unfit to live, and I glad in any way to be rid of one who would, in the event of such a foul slur on our house occurring, send me to the tomb of my ancestors a sonless, broken-hearted man."

"Father, you shall never blush for me," cried Rupert, energetically. "If the infirmities of my nature lead me any time to commit an excess which will stain our name and give you pain, I will spare Sir Walter the trouble, and his sword the indignity, by inflicting upon myself a death I should then so well merit. Trust me, father, that the sword wielded by my progenitors—by you—when given into my hands, shall be borne, while I have life, without diminution of its honour, and be restored to you, or to the family, as undefiled as when received."

"I believe you, my boy—I believe you," exclaimed the old Earl, proudly and fondly; "and when in the heat of action—the midst of danger—may God protect and preserve thee, to make glad my heart in my declining years."

"Most earnestly do I respond to that prayer," said Agnes. "But, dear father, where is the necessity of exposing him to the danger at all? There is plenty for him to do at home in managing the vassals and the affairs of the estate. Why should he go abroad to hazard his life for some mistaken notion of fame—some extraordinary desire to excel in slaughtering his fellow-creatures?"

"You are very severe, fair Agnes," observed Sir Walter, rather gravely.

"But I speak the truth. Deny it as you may, that is the bare fact."

"Nay; the country demands our services, and we freely yield them. When we meet our enemy in battle, we hazard life and limb, and are as liable to be slaughtered as to slaughter; they have the chance of an equivalent if they can take it. And we have no idea of slaughter, farther than cutting down an obstacle which impedes us, as we would root out any evil productive of danger to our peace. He is most fortunate whom skill and the bounty of Providence brings unscathed through the battle; but although he may possess great skill, and labour to attain it, still it is from no desire to excel in the slaughter of his fellow creatures, but rather that the victory may be decided in favour of those he has left behind, and who look to his exertions as well as to the efforts of others, to defend them from oppressive conquerors, to preserve their homes, and protect their rights and liberties."

"It may be so," persisted Agnes; "but why should the noblest and best be picked out to hazard their lives? Those only who have no friends, no estate, no hope, no desire for life, should go to battle; they are eager for death, and the happiness of a family is not involved in their fall."

"If the best and noblest—those who draw large revenues from the hard labour of the humble vassal, who are noble in station, because accident has made them large inheritors of wealth which is produced with toil and fatigue by those who only know rest through a few hours' disturbed, unrefreshing sleep—do not go forth to do battle for the land which gives them so much, who should? surely not your homeless, hopeless outcast. What has he to fight for? Mere love of country, and scarce that; for love of country exists mainly from the memory of home and friends, loved faces and places. If a man has no grateful recollection of those treasures to call upon, he can scarce possess an affection for a place that never yielded him any. He has no inducement to struggle in its defence, nothing to look forward to in the event of a victory, and nothing to fear in case of defeat. But he who has a happy fireside, with smiling faces round it, and would keep it sacred—who has a country that gave him birth, and the wherewithal to make him happy in it—he has every reason and right, when it is in jeopardy, to arm himself and go forth to do battle in its behalf; for there are gentle ones to save from the rude, ruthless hands of savage conquerors; and the land and its tillers to rescue from the oppression of usurpers. Believe me, fair Agnes, when the country is in danger, the highest and noblest in the land should be the first to go forth to its aid, for they have received the greatest benefits from it."

"There, there, Agnes, you see you are defeated," cried Rupert, "you have the worst of the argument. Sir Walter Manny is perfectly right, and besides, if you were to stand arguing here until doomsday, you would never alter my determination. I am bound for the wars, and God willing, to the wars I'll go."

"Oh, my good brother!" exclaimed Agnes, "I have not a doubt of your spirit of obstinacy; if you have made up your mind, and resolve to go, I acknowledge that my powers of persuasion are too weak to induce you to alter your intention, although you know how pained dear mother and I shall be at your absence—but you care not for that."

"Nay, Aggy, you are unkind," said Rupert, approaching her and taking her hand affectionately; "you cannot say I was ever, at least intentionally, unkind to you; and I know my dear mother will acquit me of ever forgetting what was due both to her and myself."

"I cannot say you were ever unkind, Rupert," replied Agnes, pressing his hand, "but you are about to be. I know you mean to leave us—I can read it in your looks—and I know that it is a hopeless task to try and change your mind; but if you will think for a moment that both you and Ulfred will be separated from us—perhaps for ever—and there will be then nobody here to cheer us, as you two have done, and we shall be lonely and miserable, and expecting daily to hear of your deaths—"

"Of our glorious success, Agnes—of our glorious success! you mean," exclaimed Rupert, enthusiastically. "Imagine some fine morning how proud you will be to hear that Rupert, son of the Earl of Tonbridge, distinguished himself in some dashing charge, and received the approbation of his Majesty Edward

the Third. Why, you will be the first to say that you are glad I am keeping up the family name, and am not sticking at home idly, like an overgrown boyish idiot."

"Faith, and I'll wager my best steel casque to a mail glove, that the first news you hear of Rupert shall make you proud, fair Agnes, natheless what you have said in disparagement of the bright and honourable profession of arms," observed Sir Walter Manny, with a smile.

"I see I have no chance with you prejudiced men," said Agnes; "I do not confess myself defeated, but I must give way because I am the weakest. But there's my cousin Ulfred has not said a word upon the question, and if he would declare himself upon my side, I would, with the accession of force, contest the battle—I must not say manfully—but with a determination not to leave it until I was utterly vanquished. How say you, Ulfred, for or against me?"

"Always for you, dear Agnes, exclaimed Ulfred, quickly, and then added, with some slight hesitation, "but in this point I am prejudiced in favour of Sir Walter's view of the subject."

"Then I surrender at discretion," uttered Agnes, with a slight laugh. "You have conquered me, Sir Walter; and, when a young lady makes such an acknowledgment to a cavalier, he ought to feel very proud."

"And if he feels as I do, he does most indubitably," returned Sir Walter; "but you shall find me a most generous conqueror. I grant you your liberty, without asking, upon your parole."

And what is the penalty, if I break my parole?"

That you shall know when you have committed the infringement?"

"But a woman's curiosity, Sir Walter—you forget that; I have a remarkable share of it, and should therefore take it as a personal favour if you would acquaint me, for I have a strong inducement to forfeit my parole, and I should like to know the penalty I should incur. Perhaps the penalty itself may be an inducement to incur it."

"Say a kiss," cried Rupert; "then she is sure to break her parole."

"It is unfair to suggest," cried Ulfred, eagerly.

"I agree with Ulfred," said Agnes, blushing.

I think Rupert is in the right," observed the Earl, laughing.

"There's two to one," shouted Rupert; "because the culprit has no voice in the sentence."

"Except in a case of this nature," uttered Agnes.

"Well, grant that there's two to two, and mother will give the casting-vote in our favour will you not, mother?"

"I am afraid not," replied his mother, mildly, with a soft smile. "I must side with your sister this time, my dear Rupert."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Ulfred, clapping his hands, but still something afraid that Rupert would carry the question. "Three to two, lost by a majority of one."

"Not if I am with Rupert; the votes are then equal, three on each side," said Sir Walter, "therefore I propose the suggestion be withdrawn; but that if I see fit to make use of the suggestion, I am at perfect liberty to do so."

"I agree to the suggestion being withdrawn," said Ulfred; "but I propose in amendment, that it shall be in the power of the lady to consent or refuse to the adoption of the suggestion."

"I consent to that arrangement," observed Sir Walter; "and if the fair Agnes refuses, I will adopt another."

"It would be injustice, Sir Walter, for the prisoner to dictate terms to the conqueror," said Agnes, giving a sly look at Ulfred; "and therefore, rather than compromise my sense of strict justice, I leave it entirely in your hands to attach the penalty, without being influenced by me—"

"Which is as much as to say, I am quite agreeable for a ki—"

"Hold your tongue, Rupert," cried Agnes, putting her hand before his mouth, "you have no right to influence the judge."

"No, no, Master Rupert," cried Ulfred, "it is not fair."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Rupert, "of course you will say so; all I have to observe is, that Agnes has lost a kiss, and she ought to pay it; and if she don't, that Sir Walter should take it, enforcing the payment of the penalty. Come, come, Agnes, pay the penalty."

"It is not incurred yet," said Agnes, retreating as Sir Walter advanced towards her.

"Ah, but it is sure to be," exclaimed Rupert; "so pay your debt, and look agreeable."

"The Lady Agnes is right," said Sir Walter. "The penalty is not incurred, nor did I advance to claim it; therefore you need not have retreated, fair Agnes. I intended merely to tell you my decision. I grant you a parole of honour, which to break is to incur the danger of a salute upon your lips by mine."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rupert, "I told you so, Agnes."

"Let me know the nature of my parole," said Agnes, smiling.

"It is that you do not again speak disparagingly of the gallant profession of arms," replied Sir Walter.

"Oh!" said Rupert," in a tone of disappointment, "you should have enforced something harder than that; she'll never break it—it is nothing to do."

"No, it is a very easy task," exclaimed Ulfred, with an almost imperceptible sigh of relief; "for I am sure my cousin will not speak ill of a profession in which her family is engaged."

"It is harder than you imagine," said Agnes, dropping her eyes, and a smile twitching at the corners of her mouth. She threw her eyes very slyly, and in a manner scarcely perceivable, at Ulfred, as she continued—"I am not likely to speak ill of the professors, where I might be allowed to rail at the profession; and though Sir Walter, apparently to his own satisfaction, had the best of the argument, I still contend that it is a ruthless profession, which is based on human slaughter, that it does much to harden the hearts of its followers, that—"

"You have broken your parole—are uttering heresy—and by your leave, lady!" cried Sir Walter with the rapidity of thought throwing his arm round, her neck, and imprinting a kiss upon her lips, without resistance; for although it would be untrue to say she did not purposely incur the penalty, yet it was paid before she expected it, and therefore could offer no opposition. Rupert uttered a shout of laughter, and struck his hands together gleefully, while Ulfred frowned, and clapped his hand to his sword; but seeing that Agnes, though a deep scarlet, was smiling, and hearing Rupert joined by the Earl in his laughter, his better sense also returning to him, he entered into their mirth and said,—

"Fairly caught, by St. Paul! 'twas fairly incurred, and fairly paid. You will beware now, Agnes, how you speak disparagingly of the profession of arms."

"And having been thus fortunate," said Sir Walter, "will you permit me to retire? I have to arrange some matters with my fellows, and when it is completed, I will do myself the pleasure of returning and

engaging the Lady Agnes again in some controversy, providing, if defeated upon the question, that she will pay the penalty of defeat in the same coin."

"I am rather inclined to think that she will do nothing of the kind," said Agnes.

"I will take my chance," he rejoined, and making a low graceful bend, he quitted the room.

"I'faith she has sweet lips," he uttered, as he took his way to the quarter of the castle which contained his followers. "And a sweet form and face too! Um! I should like to know how far her inclining to me led her to banter me about Violet; and then that kiss, too; she certainly intended me to have it—and I as certainly intended to have it, although our cousin Ulfred did look so grim; but then I wonder not at that, if, as I suspect, he loves her rather more than he would a cousin or sister from mere relationship. I expect, too, that she is not a jot behind in her affection for him; and her coquetry with me, in the first place, was merely the effect of girlish spirits; and, in the second, a desire to tease him. By the Mass! I should hate that same teasing; it is very extraordinary that women are so fond of that mischievous quality, and so frequently lose one who would be to them all they could wish, just from a strange desire to torment, and show their power. I never knew a man tease a woman he really loved; but have, too often, seen a female hazard a most worthy and desirable man's love to gratify this singular spirit. I am young to say this, it is true; but I have had much experience when at court, and in all the cases I have ever seen, where a young girl has teased a lover unmercifully when in her power, when he has had her in his, he has shown that he never forgot the numberless wounds to his pride, and repaid them bitterly. Teasing tends wonderfully to weaken affection; and if a woman whom I loved were once or twice to serve me after that fashion, I am afraid that my love would not be very enduring. A man may have an humble opinion of himself, but he does not like the object of his affections to think so, nor that she should before him strive to make others be of the same opinion; it wounds his self-love, and is a wound that *never* heals. Ha, ha! I remember that little coquette, Blanche de la Motte, one of the prettiest but vainest little Christians that ever existed since Noah walked out of the Ark with his family; I was certainly fond of the little jade, and I am sure she was of me, or else she would never have—but that's of no consequence. Now, although she was perfectly aware that I was annoyed beyond everything, when she began flirting with young fellows before my face, still she would persist in it. There is one consolation I possess—every fellow she spoke slightingly to of me I fought and defeated; and when I had beaten them all, and fellows began to be doubtful of being seen in her company when I was near, I gave her up. I couldn't have loved her very much, but I thought I did, and so did she; but she found I was not to be made a fool of whenever she pleased, and so we parted. She tossed up her head, and said she did not care in the least; that she had plenty, and could very easily spare one who was of no importance to her—she would not break her heart. I thought I should break mine, and was fool enough to tell her as much. Yes, I was a fool there; because it was not true, as I have since found—still I thought so then. With all her indifference, the next time I saw her, her eyes were red with weeping, and when we crossed, her handkerchief was up to them, but she snatched it away, and looking me full in the eyes, smiled not a little bitterly, and passed on. Then a week passed away, and it was given out that she was ill, and then came my appointment to the army. Ah, well! poor Blanche! poor Blanche! if you had never teased me, we might still be to each other what we were when we first knew each other. I certainly felt much regret and pain to part from her, but I always consoled myself by rembering the wounds she had inflicted upon my self-love before others; it is wonderful how it reconciled me to the change. It read her a lesson she profited by for some time. Her lovers were few, for it got known that we had quarrelled and parted, and that she had been ill in consequence—but that she denied: however, it was believed, and there were not many who were desirous of having a second edition of a heart; so she became comparatively deserted, and her light-hearted mirth and lively spirits all left her. Poor Blanche! I much fear if I had not been at hard fighting far away from you, and had seen the change, I should have foregone my resolution and been again at thy feet a captive; but I was, perhaps fortunately, not near. And he who claims thee as a wife, it appeared, knew nothing of what had transpired between us, saw, fell in love with thee, and married thee. I would wager my bonny Tricksy she never teased him—no, nor will she ever; and the consequence will be, never having been stung by insulting expressions coming from the mouth of one from whom we expect loving and affectionate words, he will, as he lives, unless he is a fool as well as rascal, cherish and foster her in his heart of hearts. I am sorry to see, though I am as yet a gainer, that Agnes is in a slight degree touched with it; she will never get a finer or handsomer fellow than her cousin Ulfred, and pretending something of a preference, or at least an inclination for the attentions of another, is not the way to retain his heart. There now, is sweet Violet—the bright peerless lady of my heart, she would never descend to the weakness, for she would not pain any one for the whole universe filled with lovers, more especially one who regarded her with the tenderest affection; but then she is different to all the world beside. Dear Violet, I most certainly love you; of that there is no doubt. Whatever I have felt for others is not a tithe part of what I feel for you, and shall continue to do while life remains; but she can never be mine—never, never. Well, well, I'll think no more of it; but if ever I did aught in battle which a knight might be proud to own, this night will I strike a blow in your behalf, such as may do honour to your service."

"Sir Walter, Sir Walter, a word with you," cried the voice of a person following him. He turned and beheld Ulfred advancing with hasty steps.

"Ha!" he muttered. "This is the Saxon cousin, I suppose, come to demand satifaction for saluting his heart's dame. He will find me ready to stand by what I have done."

"Sir Walter Manny," exclaimed Ulfred, on reaching him. "I have a favour to ask of you."

"I shall be happy to grant it, if in my power," said Sir Walter, expecting the favour required to be a polite appeal to a passage of arms.

"You have some fifty fellows here at your command?"

"I have," returned Sir Walter, with some surprise.

"They are your own men; fellows who have always fought with you—fear nothing on earth. Is it not so?"

"It is. Why ask you?"

"Because I need their aid, and you will oblige me beyond aught I can name, if you could lend them to me for a short time."

"When do you require them?"

"To-day."

"To-day? I am sorry for that, for I have some

work in hand for them, which will not brook delay."

"How very unfortunate! Perhaps your matters are not so urgent as mine. Believe me, Sir Walter, I would not press this matter, but that it is an affair of the very greatest importance."

"The service upon which I require them is no less so, even that of saving a number of unoffending, harmless people from a heavy wrong intended them."

"It is a work of an exactly similar nature which now incites me to ask their aid; my uncle's vassals are too few, and not to be depended upon, and knowing your prowess and that of your followers, I thought if I could have induced you to lend them to me, and yourself accompany us, we should have the satisfaction of trouncing a set of atrocious scoundrels, who make a merit of performing the most outrageous villanies whenever occasion offers."

"At what hour do you need them? Perhaps we may arrange the affair, although I shall have some sharp work for them to-night."

"I should want them as soon as they can get ready, and not detain them, perhaps, more than three hours."

"Who are these scoundrels you are desirous of punishing?"

"I will tell you. I was conveying some treasure to London, for Edward; and, on my way, stopped at a village. I was, in the open day, attacked by a band of robbers; but, thanks to the courage of the villagers, the rascals were beaten off, and I quitted for London, where I safely arrived with the treasure. I have since learned that the villanous marauders have attacked the village in the night, inflicted the most horrible barbarities and monstrosities on the inhabitants, and then burned the village to the ground."

"Was this Wrotham?"

"It was. Have you heard of it?"

"I have; and your request for my fellows is a strange coincidence."

"I would not have asked, but I have tried in vain to get a troop from Edward, to avenge the poor villagers of their wrongs. He put me off from day to day; at last he said, 'There's young Walter Manny in Kent, somewhere, with fifty war-dogs at his back; tell him your tale, and, my life o'nt, he cuts this Grif of the Bloody Hand and his devils to pieces, if they be four times his number. Commend me to him, and tell him, in aiding you, he will oblige me.' I have tracked you to my uncle's, where I guessed you had gone; and now, having told you my story, shall be most grateful for your assistance."

"And you shall have it. Faith, it is strange we should be bound on the same errand. These rascally thieves are to-night to attack the little village of Brenchley. I am going to take my 'war-dogs,' as his Majesty is pleased to call them, over there secretly at sunset; and if I know what my people can do, these rascals will find themselves caught in the trap they laid for others."

"By heaven! this is strange and fortunate. I intended to have posted to the wood, hunted the rascals out, and hung every dog of them."

"That would have been hard work, and cost me more men than I can find it convenient to spare; the devils could have played a long game behind the trees. In the village we shall have them in a mass, and be able, there, to do as we please with them. You will go with me, of course?"

"Will I not?"

"Perhaps you will on with me now, to have a word or two with my men."

"With all my heart. I am impatient until I can have an hour's cutting at the villains."

"Do not be in too great a hurry. This Grif will wait for us. He will not begin his attack before the time he believes all the villagers are buried in profound repose; and by that time we shall be there to receive him."

"You shall find me no laggard."

"I doubt it not; in such a case no true heart would be a laggard. We have fought in the same field, you say?"

"Yes, Sir Walter, the same field upon which you won your spurs, Halidon Hill. I had not much to do save conveying orders from troop to troop."

"There was not a man there who was not obliged to fight well; you did your duty I am sure, and I know it was one full of danger."

"I tried to do it, and was fortunate enough to please Edward in the endeavour; but I envied you the expressions which fell from his lips, as ever and anon you did some daring act which astonished both armies."

"It was my good fortune; you may soon have the same chance of signalising yourself, for there will shortly be very hot work upon the Continent."

"I shall be glad of any opportunity of fighting by your side?"

"You will have that opportunity to-night. By-the-bye, what say you to taking young Rupert with us? he is a noble youth—and it will be a lesson to him."

"He will be delighted—but the family must not know the service we are upon."

"That is easily managed—you break it to him. I should like to give him his first lesson."

"He understands the use of a sword well; my lessons have not been thrown away upon him."

"You have taught him so far?"

"I have, and found him a very apt pupil."

"Then I see no reason why he should not go. Ha! there's one of my fellows. Ho! Oliver Wildfire!"

The trooper, who was passing some small distance from Sir Walter, arrested his steps, and making an obeisance, approached him and inquired—

"What is your will, Sir Walter?"

"Summon thy comrades—I have some work for them to do."

"I am glad to hear it, Sir Walter; our blades are rusting with idleness."

"You will have to clean them after to-night's work; they will not be so bright as they are now."

"All the better, Sir Walter; we want to exercise them a little; we are rather out of practice, and shall be glad of any opportunity afforded of rubbing up our knowledge of a soldier's work."

"You shall have the opportunity—away with you! Gather the troop, and bid them hold themselves in readiness to depart on sharp service two hours before sundown."

The trooper made a military obeisance, and departed with quick steps and a pleased air to obey Sir Walter's command. As Sir Walter finished his words Rupert came up, and having overheard the order, said—

"Aha! Sir Walter, what's in the wind now? sharp service two hours before sun-down, eh? Am I o'erstepping the bounds of propriety in asking what is the object of the sharp service?"

"Oh, no; if you desire to know, I have no objection to tell you."

"I most certainly desire to know—the very words, sharp service, make me feel anxious. I long for the time to come when I shall be at hard fighting in a battle field, and of course anything of the same nature coming under my immediate notice rouses strongly

my curiosity; therefore, if you will not be in any way compromising your honour, pray tell me."

"Some of the rogues infesting yon wood are about this night to attack a village some short distance hence. I have received information of their purpose, and with the aid of my people intend defeating their plan, and trouncing them as well. Your cousin Ulfred accompanies me, to partake of the sport."

"What, Ulfred! are you going to mix in the fray?"

"I am, Rupert, and with no small amount of pleasure, too."

"How I should like to go with you—oh, how I should like to go; will you take me? It will not disarrange your plans, I am sure, to add another to your number; I will mix with the troop, Sir Walter, and obey your orders to the letter. Do not refuse me—it will give me a little insight into the life I am about to enter upon, and an opportunity to shew that I have not forgotten what you, Ulfred, have taught me; take me with you!"

"Are you quite sure that your heart will not play you false, and make you, when hand to hand with some fierce black-muzzled rascal, wish yourself snug at home upon your pallet, dreaming of heaven?"

"I will not disgrace my name, rest assured, Sir Walter, at any time, or in any danger," said Rupert, proudly. "You shall find, albeit I have never yet mixed in conflicts sanguinary and deadly, that I will bear myself as coolly as when, with my sister Agnes leaning upon my arm, I walk upon the ramparts to look upon the landscape beneath. Let me go with you, and let me be near you in the fight; keep your eye upon me, and if I quail, or show terror, or act in any way unbecoming a brave man, spurn me from you, and let me stay at my mother's side, with a distaff, for the remainder of my life."

If I consent that you should accompany us, will your parents assent?"

"Leave that to me—I can easily arrange that part of the affair; all I want to know is, whether you will let me accompany you."

I give you my permission freely, if you are sure the Earl and Countess will not object, and take umbrage at me for bearing you into a stirring scene a little hazardous."

Thanks, Sir Walter—many thanks. Then I will go with you. I shall tell my father that you are engaged in a small expedition, and that I and Ulfred intend joining you. He will think it a mere visit of ceremony somewhere, or some duty to be performed by order of the King, and will neither refuse me, nor ask its nature; so there will be no objection made, or umbrage taken."

"Very well, we start at two hours before sundown, as you heard; therefore be armed and accoutred, have your steed saddled, and be ready to start at the appointed time upon your first military essay."

"I will be ready, never fear. I will now to the stable, look to my horse, and see if he is in good condition; then I will get my weapons in proper order, and, hey! for the skirmish."

"Do not make too much sign of preparation, Rupert," observed Ulfred, "or else my uncle will take notice of it, guess its meaning, and put a stop to your journey."

"I will take every precaution, Ulfred. I will be as secret as you can wish; but, even if he should observe my proceedings with a suspicious eye, I shall tell him that I am making ready to accompany Sir Walter, accoutred as becomes one who will shortly be a member of his troop. Oh! Ulfred, rest satisfied, I am too desirous to be of your party to hazard a chance of not being permitted to join. Adieu for the present—I am off to the stable!"

He waved his hand as he concluded and, setting off at full speed, was soon out of sight.

"The lad is a bold one," said Sir Walter, "and will make a good soldier."

"He is possessed of stout courage," exclaimed Ulfred, "has a generous heart, and is open and frank in his conduct. The Earl has no reason to be ashamed of his son."

"Rather say he should be proud of his children. Rupert is a manly fellow, and the Lady Agnes is beautiful; and, what is rarely seen in a woman of beauty, intellectual also. She is possessed, likewise, if I mistake not, of every amiable qualification as well as personal accomplishment."

"She is an angel!" uttered Ulfred, enthusiastically.

"You ought to be a competent judge," observed Sir Walter, smiling; "you were brought up together."

"We were," replied Ulfred, somewhat musingly, "almost from infancy: had only each other to depend on for the happy passing of hours which would otherwise have been sad and lonely. My father was a brother whom the Earl loved very dearly, and whose loss he regretted deeply; Agnes and I, therefore, had little or no attention paid to us, beyond what the dictates of maternal love induced the Countess to bestow upon us. We were playmates, and learned to look upon each other as brother and sister, loving each other fondly, and not caring to quarrel, because, in such an event, we both should have suffered not only the pain of estrangement, but of complete solitude. However, there was little fear of disagreeing: she was always of so sweet a disposition, there was no possibility of quarrelling, and we went on living very happily, until I grew old enough to throw up an idle life, and mix in the world; for, albeit, my quitting my uncle's kind roof was against his wish, I was determined not to impose upon his kindness, and to carve for myself, if not a fortune, at least the feeling of independence."

"And how bore the Lady Agnes the change?"

"As a sister would bear the loss of a brother who had been her playmate and companion many happy years."

"So I can conceive; but will you pardon me the question, nor think I ask it from any feeling of impertinent curiosity, for, believe me, I am actuated by no such motive. When you parted with the Lady Agnes, did you not each discover you were not brother and sister?"

"You mean, of course, that the affection we felt for each other, which we had supposed to be the love of brother and sister, we found to be that of lovers?"

"Exactly."

"I can understand the motive which leads you, Sir Walter, to ask the question, and, in requesting to be excused answering it, have, perhaps, but to say that I am already aware, from what has fallen from my uncle's lips, that he will be proud to have Sir Walter Manny for his son-in-law. You start—"

"Ay, and enough to make me. I hope that I have not in any way committed myself, in the attentions I have paid to the Lady Agnes, to make him think so."

"Is it not, then, your intention or wish to ally yourself with the family?"

"No such thought ever entered my head. I—I am in no situation to wed—am unsettled—a soldier of fortune, mixing constantly in scenes of strife, and, though here to-day, am liable a short time hence to be abroad, fighting Edward's battles. I should, indeed, most earnestly regret if any over-strained courtesy on my part has induced the Earl to think I was desirous of gaining his fair daughter's affections.

My respectful bearing to her will, I am sure, make her acquit me of seeking to make her believe I loved, and was anxious to obtain her hand."

"But your bearing a short time since, Sir Walter—"

"What! the kiss?"

"Yes."

"A mere matter of gallantry. Any man possessed of the smallest spark of homage for the sex would, in the same situation, have done the same."

"Then you are not in love with her, nor seek her hand?"

"Unequivocally, no! I admire and respect her most profoundly, but I already love another; that's the truth, and there is no use in denying it to you. I have also another reason which should have prevented my offering my hand, and that is, that I am satisfied you love each other as lovers—not brother and sister, or cousins, but as *bonâ fide* lovers!"

"I do not deny that I love her most devotedly, since you have given me to understand the state of your feelings; and I thought she loved me equally, until a short time since, and, from what transpired then, I fear I am displaced for one she might gladly acknowledge as possessing her heart."

"Still harping on the kiss. I tell thee, good Ulfred, I know much of women. My youth was passed among them, and I am aware of the many little tricks and fancies which love puts on; but rest thee content, for that kiss would never have been granted had you not been present. 'Twas a mere piece of girlish liveliness, done merely to teaze you, and see what power she had over you. If she felt any affection for me, surpassing that she bears towards you, she would as soon thought of kissing my fellows all round, as have suffered me to salute her in the presence in which we stood. Dismiss any little feeling of distrust or annoyance you may feel, and be satisfied that you are not less loved because she permitted me to salute her; indeed, I hardly know if the permission would have been accorded. I took the kiss before she was prepared to resist, and so let that be the end of the matter. My motive in asking you the question I just now proposed was to satisfy a speculation I had formed, that two persons, of opposite sex, being brought up children together, and always having been very much attached, would, upon any event arising which would cause a separation, find they loved each other devotedly, independently of any ideas of relationship. For instance, do you suppose that, after you quitted your uncle's roof, that the Lady Agnes looked upon you, thought of you, and spoke of you only as a dear brother?"

"No, I flattered myself that she thought of me as one for whom she felt the attachment which is far beyond a sisterly affection, and should have felt, indeed, sadly disappointed if I had imagined otherwise."

"It would have been against nature, if it had been otherwise. Ah, Violet!" he muttered to himself, "I am right; you will find the love you bear Wat Tyler is no sister's love."

"Perhaps so," said Ulfred, in answer to the audible remark; "but sometimes I think it would be better if she did not love me."

Why?" asked Walter, with some surprise.

You must understand I am the son of a younger brother, who inherited nothing but his sword and the family honour, my uncle receiving with the earldom estates which are poor, heavily mortgaged, and yield little more than sufficient to support his dignity with respectability, unaccompanied by any display. He is doing his utmost to improve them by the time they will come into Rupert's hands; he has, therefore, naturally a desire that Agnes should be united to one who can support her handsomely as an Earl's daughter, without calling upon him for aid. This I cannot do, for court service is paid scantily, and I must wait perhaps a long weary period ere my services are repaid with estates which may give me a right to claim her as a wife; and so, when I was given to understand that you were looked on as a desirable son-in-law, and one there was every probability of gaining, I schooled myself, much as it pained me, to forego my own wishes for the sake of Agnes's happiness.

"But there must have been some mistake in imagining me a desirable son-in-law. I stand in no better position than you do; I am a soldier of fortune, without estates. I have a title, it is true; but nothing wondrous to support it with. I am the son of a Baron of Hainault, and there is no more wealth in the family than is already bespoken by other members of it; therefore our good uncle, the Earl of Tonbridge, would have made a sad mistake if his design had succeeded. Pray, Ulfred, was I invited to this castle with the intention of being made a son-in-law?"

"No; at least acquit my uncle of a meanness he would scorn. He imagined you were attached to Agnes, judging by your deportment; having taken the fancy, and believing that Agnes also was well affected towards you, for she spoke praisingly of you to him, he saw nothing to prevent your union, and mentioned as much to me. I confess I felt sorely wounded, but he had been so kind to me, so generous, aye, even a father to me, when I was young and helpless, and a good friend when I entered the world, that I felt it would be an ill return for his kindness, if I had declared that I, who possessed but my sword, loved his daughter, and had gained her affections—thus ungratefully destroying the hopes he had fondly raised, and proving myself little better than a selfish ingrate. I therefore endeavored to look upon the sad termination of wishes I had formed with as calm an eye as possible, and bear my disappointment in such guise that Agnes should not suffer if she consented to her father's views, seeing me wretched. I must do Agnes the justice to say she is quite unconscious of her father's desire, and her conduct to you has not arisen because she was aware that her father sought your alliance."

"I understand the whole matter now plainly, Ulfred; and let me assure you that, in making me thus much your confidant, you have not lessened, in the slightest degree, your chances of success. I may have it in my power to further your wishes beyond what you may expect, and I shall feel great pleasure in doing it the moment an opportunity occurs.

"Sir Walter, I feel your kindness deeply; it is no small compliment to me that you make me an offer of service, for I know that were I in any degree unworthy, I should not receive it: all I can say in addition to thanks is, that you shall not find me undeserving of your generosity."

"I am quite satisfied that I shall always be proud to own you as a friend, Ulfred; and now let us separate. If my eyes deceive me not, the flutter of a white garment tells me that a young lady is searching for you. I go to see that the appointments of my fellows are properly cared for, and you—but I will not anticipate you; farewell, we shall meet anon."

"Farewell," rejoined Ulfred, warmly grasping the hand which Sir Walter smilingly held to him.

They separated—Sir Walter Manny to the quarter where his men were busy making preparation for their night's work, and Ulfred in the direction Sir Walter had pointed out as the spot where he caught the flutter of a white garment; he reached it, and found

that Sir Walter's quick eye had not been deceived; Agnes was there, standing deep in thought; the footstep of Ulfred aroused her.

"Dear Agnes," he exclaimed, "I am very glad I have met thee."

"I expected to have heard thee say so, Ulfred; and now tell me why thou art glad."

"Because I love to be near thee—to be in thy presence—to see thy gentle eyes turned upon me, and feel upon my heart the music of thy voice."

"Ulfred!—no frown—no pouting lip—no averted eye—but kind words, in a kind tone: how is this? I certainly expected a little ebullition of fury at least; if not that, a very constrained grandness of demeanour, and a very considerable number of 'Lady Agneses' interlarding thy speeches. What has happened to make thee so friendly, Ulfred?'

"What has happened to make me unfriendly?"

"Oh, Ulfred, that smile has ruined all; you know to what I allude, or you would look as if something had occurred to take your breath away, if I had asked you the question, and you did not instantly know my meaning. I know you of old. I should have had the pleasure of hearing a solemn voice ejaculating in measured tones, 'What means the Lady Agnes? It pleaseth thee to be mysterious to day, Lady Agnes. It affords the Lady Agnes evident satisfaction to make me look like a fool'—"

"Nay, Agnes, I never said that."

"Perhaps not, but you have looked as much. Well, Ulfred, are you not angry with me?"

"For what?"

"For what? Ah, Ulfred, all this ignorance is affected; vent your rage at once; smile a little bitterly, and say, 'The Lady Agnes has a perfect right to give her kisses to whom she pleases; that, of course, you have no right to dictate to the Lady Agnes whom she is to permit to salute her, or whom not; the Lady Agnes most certainly, while she is the Lady Agnes, can do as she thinks right, though once you had hoped that the Lady Agnes'—"

"Come, come, Agnes, that is unlike me."

"Exactly like; that is your very style, and those your words; and I am at a loss to surmise to what miracle I am to attribute your present blandness of manner."

"To your presence."

"Most ridiculous nonsense! Now confess, Ulfred, that when Sir Walter made himself—a—"

"Foolish!"

"No—agreeable, did not you feel in a perfect fever, clapped your hand to your sword, and put on your never-failing frown?"

"If the Lady Agnes thought it so agreeable, surely I had no right to frown—"

"Now it's coming. Proceed, Ulfred."

"Ha! ha! ha! I confess my weakness, Agnes, with all humility; but where we love we are all selfish. I love you dearly, most dearly, and I acknowledge I feel a pain when I have any little fancy that you do not feel so kindly towards me as I could wish. I think you love me, Agnes—"

"Do you? don't make sure that it is not a pleasing delusion you are labouring under. I am not quite certain that I do."

"Nor I quite certain I am not so presumptuous—but after the many years we have passed together, and you always so kind to me, I am sure that you do not hate me, and am not sure you don't love me,—but for argument's sake, suppose you love me."

"If I loved you, 'twould be for something more than argument sake. Well, well, no pouting; suppose I do love you, what then?"

"Why, if any young damsel made love to me—"

"Made love to you—ha! ha! No, Ulfred, that is beyond supposition."

"Well, but I mean if a young damsel suffered me, in your presence, to kiss her, and acknowledge that she found it very agreeable, would not you pout, and feel in a perfect fever, clap your hand to your sword, if you wore one, and put on a never-failing frown?"

"Oh no. I might smile a little bitterly, and say my cousin Ulfred has a perfect right to bestow his kisses on whom he pleases, but of course I had no right to dictate to my cousin Ulfred whom he is to salute, or whom not. My cousin Ulfred, while he is my cousin Ulfred, can do as he thinks right, though once I had hoped that my cousin Ulfred would have remembered his cousin Agnes in the playmate of his early years, as one whom he loved devotedly, and who would be the solace and joy of the future, the partner of his fate, and one who would never tire in bringing him happiness."

"You are in a bantering mood to-day, Agnes; but as my time is short, I will not show any grandness of demeanour, nor put on my never-failing frown—I will smile, and be all good humour; but you must confess you know you did wrong, and justly expected me to be in an ill-mood."

"For what?"

"For what? Why, because Sir Walter was almost asked by you to salute you."

"For shame, Ulfred, that is an unkind remark—very ungenerous of you to say I almost asked him. I should be really offended with you, if I thought you spoke of me in earnest now."

"I beg your pardon, Agnes, I had forgotten; it was Rupert's fault."

"You are well acquainted with every circumstance now, yet you said, 'for what?' in such an apparently unconscious manner, when I asked you if you were not angry with me."

"Well, Agnes, let us change the subject, and take a stroll among the flowers in the garden, for the time is slipping on, and ere long I must be gone."

"Gone!—where?"

"A slight affair of duty with Sir Walter Manny, who has now gone to summon his troop."

"Summon his troop! Ah, Ulfred, then it is upon some dangerous undertaking."

"Nay, love, 'tis nothing; some visit, or King's service"

"But do you know what it is?"

"Sir Walter Manny knows all, and I am, by the King's orders, under his command."

"I am sure it is no visit; it is some dangerous service, or Sir Walter would not take his troop; some dreadful cutting and slaughtering. Can you not stay with us, dear Ulfred, until he returns?"

"No, indeed, Agnes; I dare not. Indeed, I would not."

"Would not, Ulfred!"

"No, love; it is a matter in which my honour is concerned."

"Your honour! You have not, through my foolish heedlessness, quarrelled with Sir Walter Manny, dear Ulfred, have you?"

"No, dearest, we are the best friends. Make your mind easy, it is a mere matter of duty; we shall return in the morning."

"You cannot deceive me, Ulfred. I know quite enough of Sir Walter Manny to be certain, that unless there was a large body of men to oppose, he would not take his troop with him."

"He would, Agnes, in some cases—as a guard of honour, for instance."

"Not he—he eschews ostentation. Answer me truly, Ulfred; is not this some expedition in which there will be fighting?"

and if I thought it would contribute to your happiness to be made acquainted with our purpose, I would not hesitate."

Drawn by H. W. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

"What should make you think so?"

"If you love me, answer me."

"I do love you, as you know, most dearly, Agnes:

"Indeed it will, Ulfred; for at least one uncertainty will be destroyed."

"But I am pledged to secresy; and if Sir Walter

was to know I had disclosed it, he would hold me in scorn."

"None other shall know, dear Ulfred. I will conceal it from all—from my mother, even."

"You press me very hard, and I can refuse you nothing; so I suppose I must tell thee. A band of marauders, after visiting Wrotham, as you have heard, with every species of horror, are this night about to attack another village. I, Sir Walter Manny, and his men, are going to prevent them; they cannot withstand us, and therefore fear not, dearest."

"If I thought there would not be much danger, I should be glad, Ulfred, that you made one to punish those wicked monsters; but I know, that even in such affairs as this you are about to join, death is dealt out fearfully. These wretches, having everything to lose in the event of defeat, fight with desperate ardour; and I do not know but attacks of this nature are, in reality, more hazardous than a field of battle."

"Never think of it, dear Agnes; we are all in the hands of Providence, and must put our trust in it. I shall not die, be assured, until I am ordained to do so, whether I am in scenes of far greater peril than the one I shall enter to-night, or seated by thy side in a leaf-bedecked bower. When the time arrives for me to yield up my last breath, not all the care I can use will keep it in my body; so think no more about it. Believe only that when I quit you, I have merely left you shortly to return."

"I would I could think so; but, alas! I have not strength of mind sufficient. My imagination is too active, and knowing the dangerous mission you are on, I shall conjure up all sorts of frightful visions, depicting you in situations of extremest danger."

"It will be very weak of thee, Agnes, if thou dost. Knowing this infirmity of thine, why didst thou inquire of me my destination with such earnestness? Believe me, an' I had known the use you would have made of my information, thou should'st never have learnt from me that which had made thee thus uneasy."

"You would have spared me no pain in your silence. I should have guessed by your preparations that you were bound upon some hazardous enterprise, and if unacquainted with any information respecting it, I should have imagined it far more terrible than it really is, and suffered all the tortures of agonizing suspense in the highest degree. It is a consolation, though a poor one I confess, to know where you are going, and that you are accompanied by Sir Walter Manny, whose extraordinary valour and knowledge of war is a guarantee at least, if it is in the power of man to accomplish it, for your success and safety."

"Were Sir Walter Manny here he would doubtless feel highly flattered by the Lady Agnes's good opinion of his prowess; but her cousin Ulfred begs to assure her, notwithstanding the interest she affects in his safety, that in any situation of hazard, he trusts to his right arm and good sword to extricate him, without appealing, like a frightened hind, to the aid of even the puissant Sir Walter Manny, who has found such favour in the eyes of the lady Agnes."

"The Lady Agnes begs to assure her cousin Ulfred that she feels quite deprived of breath, by the singularly ungenerous speech he has done her the obligation to utter. It is, to speak most leniently, exceedingly unkind to make such a return for the weakness I have displayed, in showing you how much I was concerned for your safety. I confess I did not think you would have insulted me because I naturally expressed a desire that you should go through the dangerous duty you are about to perform unharmed. I feel your unkindness much; but trust me, Ulfred, I will not again inflict annoyance on you, by acquainting you with my foolish fears, nor expose myself to insult where I at least expect respect."

Although she tried hard to stifle her emotion, the effort was ineffectual, and she burst into a bitter flood of tears. He felt as if a sword had passed through his heart, and, with an inward curse at himself for causing this pain, tried to put his arm soothingly round her waist, but she disengaged herself angrily from his embrace, and he desisted. A silence of a moment elapsed; and then, in a voice that was unsteady and agitated, he said—

"I deserve that you should cast me off for ever, Agnes. I am a weak fool, totally unworthy of you. I am unable to palliate the ungrateful return I made you for the affectionate interest you exhibited in my welfare. Punish me as you will, Agnes; I will not complain whate'er I feel, for I have richly merited all the displeasure you can evince towards me. I can only say, as before I have said, that my ungenerous observation arose from the intensity of the love I bear you; it makes me ridiculously—nay, disgustingly selfish. I cannot endure to hear thee express or show a preference for any one but myself. I confess my weakness, but I cannot help it. There is to me none in the universe like thee, and I feel annoyed that you should think any one better than me. It is ridiculous in me to speak thus, I acknowledge—at least it seems so; but I will so far exculpate myself from the charge of vanity, by saying I do not believe that I am better, nay, so good, as the generality of humankind, neither do I wish the world to esteem me higher than I deserve; but I would have you do so, Agnes, though I fear you do not, even though you have expressed much anxiety on my account; but the blame rests not with you—it is the want of merit in me which is the cause."

"And think you, Ulfred, that I would be guilty of the meanness of expressing—or affecting, that was your word—an interest which I did not feel?"

"I can attribute nothing that is mean to you, Agnes. I ask your pardon for giving you cause to ask such a question; but—but you know my unfortunate failing, Agnes. I love you—I am sensible of my own demerits—I can see how probable it is that one gifted like Sir Walter Manny should gain your heart. What transpired to-day has made my brain whirl with apprehension, for you smiled on him, looked delightedly at him, incurred a kiss and received it from him—which was torture to me, although I tried to pass it off carelessly—and instead of appearing at all offended, seemed, on the contrary, pleased; and now, when his name is mentioned, you praise him most highly. I do not deny that he deserves it—but it is offensive to me, because it comes from your lips; and with the same breath you lower me by rating me as a know-nothing boy, who goes into battle under the care of an officer, and is kept by his side because he is a boy, and for fear the poor child should get hurt. Now, Agnes, you may see the feeling which actuated me to speak as I did. I have fancied you loved me, and I could not observe indications to the contrary, and the heart I coveted being surrendered to another, without feeling hurt and grieved. Pardon me, Agnes, if I have in any way wounded your feelings; it shall not occur again. Seeing now to what quarter your wishes tend, I will not do you the annoyance of continuing my attentions, but resign my claim to your hand and heart, and seek in the excitement of a warring life to forget—"

"The inconstancy of the lady Agnes—is it not so?"

"I said not so."

"Ah, but you mean it, and therefore, why not say so? Ulfred! Ulfred! when will you get rid of your jealous fits? If you were to survive until doomsday, I do verily believe they would still cling to thee; they will never leave thee and if fate should ever be so perverse as to make me thy wedded dame, why no cloistered nun would ever lead such a secluded life as I should be forced to pass."

"There you mistake, Agnes; once assured that you were irrevocably mine, my jealous fits would vanish for ever."

"If I could think so—"

"I will swear so."

"No, I thank thee, good cousin, thy perjury shall not have a place in my budget of sins; however, there's my hand—so far towards reconciliation: and if my cousin Ulfred is not quite so grand—has abated a little of his haughty dignity, he will, perhaps, do the humble Lady Agnes the favour of escorting her to the garden, and seating himself by her side in a 'leaf-bedecked bower,' will listen quietly to something which he will be either extremely glad or extremely sorry to hear."

"Dear Agnes, how sensible you make me of my own unworthiness."

"Dear Ulfred, do not be so humble just yet. I am ready to attend you."

Enclosing her fair hand pressingly in his, he drew her arm gently within his own, and looked fondly in her eyes as he pressed it to his side; she smiled scarcely perceptibly, and turned her head away, walked slowly with him into the garden, without uttering another word, until they reached a sweet little bower—a luxuriant mass of flowers and leaves; she seated herself beneath its soft shade, and he took his place beside her—rather closely—to which she offered no objection. After a few moments' silence, which Ulfred, gazing anxiously on her face and downward eyes, attempted not to break, she cleared her voice, as if labouring under a little agitation, and said—

"What would my cousin Ulfred say, if I were to confess I did wrong when in the society of Sir Walter Manny and himself not long since?"

"He would reply, that you must think him a strange being to hear him say, that he feels very sorry he should have so acted as to make you do your feelings the violence of confessing as much."

That is considerably in his favour; and, in order not to be outdone in kindness, his cousin Agnes will confess a little more, if Ulfred will be pleased to hear it."

"Look in my face, sweet Agnes, and see the state of anxiety I am in. Dear Agnes—nay, I am sure, in that hasty glance, you could not witness the solicitude my countenance exhibits. Why do you turn your eyes away?"

"Oh, I will give you credit for your anxiety without looking for it; besides, we never look the father in the face when we are at confession, you know; and, therefore, you will excuse my looking at the flowers—the grass—anywhere but in your eyes."

"You shall have your way in all things, so much I love you."

"Heigho! If that would but last—nay, nay, no protestations, it will waste time; listen to what I shall unfold—that I should ever have the courage! it is fortunate that we have lived so many years together as brother and sister, or I should never be equal to the task."

"Just quarrel with me a moment, will you?"

"Why?"

"I am so impatient."

"I dare say; well then, to the point. I do confess, in addition to that which I have already acknowledged, that, if I smiled on Sir Walter Manny—looked upon him delightedly—incurred purposely, to my shame I say it, a kiss and received it—and instead of appearing at all offended, seemed, on the contrary, pleased—it was not because I felt, or ever should feel, a preference for Sir Walter Manny, while my cousin Ulfred lived."

"Dearest Agnes!

"Do not interrupt her, sir; but only out of revenge for her cousin Ulfred's conduct, the last time he was at Tonbridge Castle, when he did the Lady Agnes the favor, in one of his grand fits, of walking away without bidding her farewell."

"A thousand thanks, dearest Agnes, for this explanation; but if you knew how I suffered in my own heart for my stupidity, you would have thought me sufficiently punished; however, this confession has completely removed all pain, and once more am I supremely happy."

"And now, Ulfred, if you will promise me that you will never be jealous any more—never, never, but believe in me, have every confidence,—which if you knew me as I know myself, would convince you that I would rather suffer a thousand deaths than abuse it—I will tell you what I never have yet told you."

"Promises are of little value; you will not suffer me to bind myself by oath, so I can only ask you to trust me; and if I am again guilty of the weakness, to your pain and annoyance, cast me off, never more even to hold converse with."

"I will trust you, and put greater faith in your resolve thus given than if you had bound yourself to its observance by the most fearful oaths. Well, Ulfred, understand I am moved to utter what I am about to tell thee in consideration of having wounded thy feelings to-day; and as a reparation, confess, that were Sir Walter Manny ten thousand times indebted to nature in all things more than he is, it would not make me—it would not make me—love thee less; and it is not in nature to—to love thee more than I do, dear Ulfred."

"Now the blessings of all the angels upon thee, my very dear love! thou hast made my happiness entire."

Here were two young hearts supremely happy!

The day passed rapidly away, evening drew on, and Sir Walter Manny having made the Earl acquainted with his intention to depart, had obtained his consent for Rupert to accompany him, which Agnes, knowing the nature of the expedition in which they were engaged, strove to prevent; but as she had pledged herself to secresy, and her cousin had not absolved her from the promise, she was unable to back her opposition by showing the danger to which he would be exposed, and consequently her opposition fell to the ground; especially as Rupert stoutly maintained his side of the argument, and would have looked upon the monosyllable "NO!" from his father as equal in effect to any thunderbolt which had ever fallen. It was amusing to see the arguments he put forth to refute every objection that was or could be made, and he fairly leaped with joy when an unqualified assent was yielded to his desire to accompany Sir Walter Manny.

The time for their departure at length arrived; all the troop, well armed, were mounted and were impatient—for they had been some time idle—for their work. Rupert kissed his mother and sister—shook hands warmly with his father—was the first to vault

into his saddle—and speculated with himself upon the propriety of immediately setting out, and letting Sir Walter and his cousin overtake him, in case his father might, even at the last hour, see fit to alter his mind. He was, however, joined, while thus ruminating, by Sir Walter Manny, who, leaping into his saddle, gave the order to depart to his men, and telling Rupert that Ulfred would speedily overtake them, they quitted the court-yard of the castle, crossed the draw-bridge, and trotted briskly over the greensward. Rupert, nothing loth to be gone, scarce caring who was left behind so that he was not; and he laughed and chatted gaily with Sir Walter, who was much amused by his spirits and the freshness of feeling with which he anticipated the approaching fray. Ulfred, as may be expected, stayed behind to part with Agnes. She had never before that afternoon confessed that she loved him, albeit she had given him every hope to believe that she did; and that confession had so delighted him, that he felt as if he had a thousand things to say to her; it seemed to him that he had been for years away from her, and was now about to part for a tediously long time and had not a minute to speak volumes in. Agnes, too, after her confession, hesitated less to exhibit the tenderness she felt for him, and when at length he did tear himself away, she did not return to the chamber in which her parents were, but sought the topmost turret, which commanded a view for miles round; when she had gained it, she looked eagerly down, and saw, galloping at the top of his speed, upon a bright white horse, her cousin Ulfred, following the direction Sir Walter Manny and his troop had taken. She waved her white kerchief to him, and saw that he observed her. He raised his spear in token of recognition, and she fancied she could almost hear the blessing she was sure he was breathing for her; in another minute he had joined Sir Walter, and in a few minutes more they were hid from her sight by a thick grove of trees which grew at the bottom of a hill they were descending; but though she could no longer see them, she still watched the direction they had taken. The sun was fast sinking, and they were late; Sir Walter urged them on; and she soon again had the satisfaction of seeing them gallop across an open award, studded here and there with vast elms. They looked like specks moving along; they went rapidly on. There was but one white horse in the troop—it was Ulfred's—and she waved her kerchief again to the rider, although she was almost satisfied that he could not see her, still she waved it. And soon they entered the wood, and then she lost sight of them, and knew, strain her eyes as she would, that she could not again see them from where she stood; but though of this she was convinced, yet there stood she, and muttered a farewell again and again, and felt as if she should never see him again, and a cold shudder passed through her frame. She knelt down, and upon that high place seemed nearer the Being she was addressing, and felt, as the cool air fanned her forehead, and nothing was between her and the sky, that He would hear her prayers, earnestly uttered for Ulfred's safety. It was a beautiful sight to see that fair maiden kneeling upon that lofty turret—her hands clasped fervently—her face, pale with emotion, turned to the clear blue heaven—and her lips faintly moving, as she uttered, in tones scarcely audible, words which came direct from a heart sick with painful imaginings. There was nothing moving near her, save the banner which bore the family arms, waving idly in the gentle wind, or occasionally a swift bird taking its airy path to its tree-supported nest. In this position she remained some time, and then arose and gazed earnestly on the vast wood through which she knew them to be journeying; but in its extensive mass of foliage could descry no opening through which they might pass and she catch another glimpse. The sun was showing the last edge of his broad disc, and the tint of the trees and hills began to change their hue from gold to deep purple, the shadows to deepen, and that which previously had been distinctly seen to mingle with surrounding objects in misty imperceptibility; stars became visible, and then the lady Agnes, feeling as if her heart would break, looked her last, lingering, long gaze, and, with her kerchief to her weeping eyes, quitted the turret, and retreated to her chamber to weary heaven with prayers for the safety of one whom her heart told her was dearer to her than life itself.

CHAPTER XIV.

"They come * * *
* * * * *
Now, Ghebers, now—if e'er your blades
Had point or prowess, prove them now—
Woe to the file that foremost wades!
They come.
* * * *
Ne'er was horde of tyrants met
With bloodier welcome."
The Fire Worshippers.—MOORE.

"Dead bodies trampling o'er,
Firing, and thrusting, slashing, sweating, glowing,
* * * * *
Thus on they wallowed in the bloody mire
Of dead and dying thousands—sometimes gaining
A yard or two of ground." *Don Juan.*—BYRON.

"By his rare example, made the coward
Turn terror into sport: as waves before
A vessel under sail, so men obeyed,
And fell below his stem: his sword (Death's stamp)
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
Was timed with dying cries."
Coriolanus.—SHAKSPERE.

"Upon them!—ho! there—victory is ours."
Sardanapalus.—BYRON.

MARK GRAYLING and his friends entrenched themselves among the thickly clustering elms, which formed the grove pointed out to them by the stranger wherein to take their station. Mark, who crouched behind the broad trunk of the foremost tree, while his companions stood motionless, kept a sharp watch upon Grif and his men.

"The villains are impatient to be in the village," he whispered to a companion near him. "The moon is showing herself above the tree tops, and before she has left them beneath her, we shall be briskly occupied. Aha! Each man to his post—bolts to your bows! bolts to your bows! Here they come, by heaven! They are running. Stand by—stand by. Are you ready?"

"All ready," was the quick reply.

"They are racing to their doom," muttered Mark, through his clenched teeth, as he took up his cross-bow, which, with his spear, he had stood against the tree behind which he was crouching, and fitted it with a bolt. He then knelt down in the shadow of the

tree, and proceeded to take his aim. "Now, lads," he continued, speaking low, but with quickness and an earnestness that made the tones of his voice deep, "now, brothers in wrong and misery, here come the hell-hounds who made Wrotham a heap of ashes. Recollect that ye all come from there; that it was your dwelling-place; that you have lost mother, father, sisters, brothers, friends, home, and those you have loved more than life; and the wretches approaching are they who have robbed ye of them—they who murdered those who gave ye birth, defiled your sisters, your betrothed and loved; fired your homes, and slaughtered your friends. And now ye have in your power a great and glorious opportunity of avenging these wrongs, which madden us to remember. Strike deep, strike home!—no quarter, no quarter!—blood for blood!"

By the low, quick, fierce exclamations breathed in reply, 'twas easy to be understood that Mark's words went to the heart of every man there, and found a ready and burning response.

"They are almost near enough," ejaculated Mark, emphasizing his words in his excitement; "is every bow bolted? Quick! quick! every man's bow to his shoulder, and his aim made."

"All ready, Mark, when you give the word," exclaimed a companion. "I have one fellow in sight, who'll not live many minutes more. How they come pouring on! They're all within range now. All ready, Mark."

At this moment a long, loud whistle sounded clear and sharp in the quiet air, and Mark exclaimed, hurriedly,

"It is the stranger's signal—fire away!"

Twang went twenty bows, and whistle went twenty bolts, as he gave the word. The aims were true, and down fell as many of the advancing devils, much to the astonishment of the remainder, who, having seen nothing moving in the village, concluded the inhabitants were all sunk in repose, and came pouring down the hill leading to it, with the satisfied assurance of meeting no opposition; but this sudden and unexpected discharge of bolts which they received, they knew not from whom or whence, startled and checked them; they halted, and again a shower of bolts poured among them, followed by a third, equally speedy, and as destructive. Grif's quick eyes, aided by the light of the moon, which threw its beams full upon the grove containing Mark and his party, detected the quarter from which the missiles came, and instantly despatched a party of thirty men to dislodge them, while he formed the remainder into a square, and made them push on. An instant's reflection elucidated the cause of this attack upon his band; his scheme he at once perceived was discovered, and these discharges of bolts, for they still continued pouring like hail about their ears, was an effort made by the villagers to drive him and his party back. He smiled in scorn as he came to the conclusion, and looked round with an air of self-gratulation upon his followers, whose numbers were increased to above a hundred, by the addition of a quantity he had sent for, who were previously infesting another portion of the wood. He knew them all to be ruthless villains, with hearts of stone, who would wade knee-deep in human blood, if circumstances required, and act as if they had not the most remote idea of mercy; and he laughed as he remembered there were not more than thirty or forty living in the village who were able to oppose him. He conjectured that the hidden cross-bow men in the grove was this little band, and chuckled, as he felt satisfied how completely he could satiate the desire he had to avenge the insult and injury which he deemed they had inflicted on him. However, he soon had reason to alter his opinion; for his men had barely descended a few yards further, and were preparing to ascend a small ridge, preparatory to descending the remainder of the hill, when Leowulf, Wat Tyler, Michael, and their friends, sprung suddenly upon them from their place of concealment, uttering a loud shout They gave the outlaws no time for preparation, but dashed at them, cutting and slashing with all the vigour and determination of desperate men, who had everything to lose in the event of defeat. The devils were astounded. If a band of spectres had suddenly started up in their path, they could not have been more surprised. Seeing that several of their comrades fell, they wavered, almost as if intending to fly; but Grif, who perceived that affairs were beginning to wear a serious aspect, and that great presence of mind was necessary to defeat this sudden and spirited attack, roared out, in a voice which sounded loud above the din of weapons—

"At them, devils! at them! give it them close and strike deep! they are only a few serfs—cut them down. On the other side of them is plenty of booty, and lasses to sport with after your labour is done."

There was a tremendous roar of indignation burst from the Brenchleyites as Grif concluded his speech. It acted like a fierce war cry shouted in their ears to urge them on to fight desperately to the death, and the vigour with which they dealt their blows after they had heard his villanous words made the devils give ground.

"Dog! fiend!" roared Leowulf at the very top of a voice proceeding from lungs of stentorian strength, "here's a man looking for thee, one who will teach thee how a base, wolfish, blood-thirsty beast should be punished. Ho! cur! whelp! sneaking poltroon! show thyself—shelter not thy beastly carcase among the wretches whom thou art driving on to certain death! Come to me, thou black-visaged, black-hearted Demon of the Bloody Hand, and I'll cut thee down—thus—thus—"

During the time Leowulf had uttered this speech he was opposed by a powerful fellow who kept him at bay with his spear, but ineffectually, and as he finished his speech, with one swing of his tremendous sword he severed the pike staff in half, and with a second clove the wretch from shoulder to chine; the man groaned dreadfully, and fell heavily; Leowulf heeded him not, but strode over his body, and dashed away at the next fellow before him, roaring out all the time for Grif of the Bloody Hand, as if the fellow he was fighting were some puny boy standing up in opposition to him; but he had not for years been accustomed to wield a huge sledge-hammer to find the use of his enormous sword hard work—he swung it as though it were a feather, and when it alighted, the effect was tremendous: it cut down everything, cleaving the steel helmets which the devils wore as if they were formed—as he had that evening expressively said—of thin pine wood. Wat Tyler kept close to him, and fought with a feeling that the safety of the village—of Violet—depended upon his example; his blood was up, and he wielded his sword with a dexterity which it gratified Leowulf to observe, and he failed not to make him acquainted with his satisfaction.

"Bravo! Wat," he exclaimed, "that's the true use of your weapon—one wave and a cut! Room for my swing, there! Ho! ho! how my blood boils and dances! Dog! how like you that? That steel is true—it's my own forging—ho! ho!"

The sword of his opponent was whirled from his grasp by the ponderous weapon of the smith as he

uttered this. He shrieked for mercy, but the call was unheeded, and the next instant he was brained!

"Look, Wat—look!" cried Michael, who, though busy at cut and thrust with a fierce antagonist, would look about him and talk too—"look! there comes Mark and his friends! Hurrah! he is driving the devils before him! See how they run!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Wat and Leowulf together. "They run—they run!"

"Press on—press on!" roared Grif, for his men began to display symptoms of retreating. "On with ye! Will ye let a handful of villagers beat ye? Shame on ye!—cut them down!"

"Grif of the Bloody Hand!" hallooed Leowulf, as he heard Grif's voice. "Cowardly dog! why dost thou shrink back? Why dost thou not set thy rascals the example of advancing? Thou ass in a lion's hide! I am cutting my way to thee! Thou might'st spare me some trouble."

"Thou shalt have thy wish, churl!" cried Grif, in reply. "I'll enter the village with thy head on a pikestaff!"

"Come on, come on, and take it, if thou canst get it!" roared Leowulf, derisively: "thou loud talker and little doer. I have a youth by my side who rung thy pate yesterday against the hard earth—hast forgotten that?"

At this moment Mark and his friends joined, as also did the stranger and his band, and the noise made by the accession of numbers prevented Grif's growling reply being heard. They all fought hand to hand, and most desperately. The war cry of some was drowned in the hurrahs of others; swords clashed against swords, spear against spear, groans of the wounded mingled with the cries of the combatants, death was dealt unsparingly, every blow was delivered, and every thrust or cut given with the intention of sparing the necessity for a second; some who were disarmed sprung upon the others and wrestled for mastery, not unfrequently appealing to the fist when deprived of their weapon. In the heat of the conflict the stranger, who had been driven near to the spot where Leowulf, like a giant, was mowing down his antagonists, exclaimed—

"We must fall back on the village; Grif has the vantage ground and the superiority of numbers as well; on level ground we may obtain that which we shall never gain here; we have already given some twenty yards of ground, though it seems as if we were advancing."

"Can that be possible?" uttered Leowulf, fiercely, tumbling his antagonist where he had sent several others, and then joined the speaker. "What is to be done?"

"We must retreat to the bottom of the hill, and there conquer or perish."

"How is the retreat to be accomplished?"

"Your voice is known to them—bid them on the instant all repair to the foot of the village."

"I have it—Wat Tyler shall manage it. Ha, look at the young dog! he's working away at the grim rascals in rare style."

"Let him finish his work; your voice is loud and will be heard by all; lose no time, for much depends upon our ground. We have not an arm to spare."

"Very well. Here goes, Brenchleyites, and friends to Brenchley!" he shouted, in tones that awoke all the echoes near, every word being heard distinctly by all around; "listen to my words, and obey them: let every man be prepared to comply with my orders the moment he hears them—are ye all ready?—Now! to the Cross for your lives—every man to the Cross, to the Cross, never to leave it alive unless as conquerors."

The moment he ceased every villager did as he bade them, and, at the top of their speed, rushed down to the village, leaving Grif and his men alone, save a number of dead and dying. The movement was admirably managed, and completely successful; but Grif lost no time in indulging in the surprise which, in common with his men, he felt at this manœuvre, but roared—

"After them—after them—they flee like frightened deer! The victory is in our hands—after them! Complete your work—no quarter! Cut all of them to pieces, and then for the booty and the women! On with ye! we are thrice their number! They know it, and are frightened! At them—at them! Devils, show yourselves invincible!" Waving his huge two-handed sword, he led the way, and his men, with a shout, impatient for plunder, rushed after him.

Brief as the time allowed was for the villagers, they managed to reach the Cross and form into three bands, making a centre and two wings, having almost the shape of half a hexagonal, being, from the nature of the ground, the best manner in which to receive their enemy. Mark Grayling's friends had still their cross-bows and a store of bolts unused, which they had been prevented employing by being compelled to quit their cover, though, by their spirited attack, they made their foes fly before them. And now, as the devils came leaping and shouting down the hill, they dealt a deadly discharge, delivering their bolts with such truth and precision of aim that not one was wasted. The stranger uttered an exclamation of approbation, as he watched the effect of the flight of bolts; but, seeing there was not time for a second discharge, bade them apply to their swords. The words had scarcely left his lips, when the devils were dashing in among them in a charge, which Grif had rarely found fail; but the villagers stood their ground bravely—they did not give an inch, but repaid with interest every blow bestowed upon them. Desperately they fought: the devils were beat back to the edge of the hill; but Grif rallied them and led them on to the charge again—his favourite charge. But again the villagers withstood the shock as if they were a stone wall; they were repulsed, and with serious loss. The stranger fought fearfully; he possessed extraordinary address, and prodigious strength in the use of his sword; he wielded it with amazing swiftness, and so dexterously, that his opponent scarce knew where the blow would alight until he felt the blood gush from the wound; he did not do his work by halves—if he cut a robber down; he did not pass him and on to others, like his companions, but no sooner had he felled his antagonist, than he buried his sword in his body twice or thrice, to be assured that he had completed his work; then would he wave his bloody sword, and attack another, and never leave him until he had killed him. He was habited exactly similar to the members of Grif's band, with one exception, and that was a snake twining round the top of his helmet, in lambent flame; and this distinction was not noticed until the fight had commenced some time. None saw how he had contrived it, but there were few of the villagers who did not see it as it waved a pale blue light on the crown of his helmet, and believe that he was a spirit sent by heaven to fight with and for them. The devils were not slow in recognising it; and, as the fate of their comrades in the wood found dead with snakes upon them had spread like wildfire among them, they immediately attributed it to the stranger, and that he was an avenging devil, come to punish them for some very heinous sins; in a great measure this was the secret of his success, for few liked to oppose him; and when they could not

escape, and fought from sheer desperation, their powers, owing to their fears, were circumscribed, and they were invariably slain. He seemed to bear a charmed life; swords and spears were thrust at him in clusters, but he escaped them all, and still continued his career of blood unmoved, save to utter some exclamation of intense hate, as he plunged his weapon, reeking with gore a second or third time into the body of his victim.

Grif, as he beheld the havoc made in his men, and with all his efforts that he could not gain an inch of ground in advance beyond the Cross, raged like a tiger; he fought madly without discretion, and consequently with little success, and he raged at that too. He had crossed swords with several, but had cut down nobody, while Mark Grayling had, when at one moment opposed to him, succeeded in inflicting a gash upon his cheek without having a wound in return; but he had been borne away and some one else opposed Grif, who was likewise carried by a rush of men from him before he could revenge the cut Mark had given him. He felt the warm blood trickling from the wound down his neck, and he grew perfectly ferocious. He had been separated from a villager by the sudden retreat of a party of his men, who had hoped to cut a path through the centre of the villagers, but found it impracticable; and Grif, in his passion, thought he should slaughter some of his own people for their cowardice, and likewise for a vent to his rage, he elbowed his way through them, yelling execrations, and of a sudden, came face to face upon Wat Tyler, who was wiping the perspiration from his forehead, having that moment cut his antagonist down. Grif in a moment recognised him, and sprung at him like a tiger, roaring—

"This to thy brain, young hell-brat!—thus pays Grif his debt." The blow, into which Grif infused all his strength, would have severed Wat's skull in twain, for he was unprepared to resist its progress, but that Michael saw the act as well as heard the words, and was near enough to cut, with all his strength at Grif's sword, and parry it, whirling it out of his hand like lightning; but Grif dashed at Michael, wrested his sword from him, flung him to the ground, and would have inflicted on him the death he had intended for Wat, but that our hero, with the quickness of thought, bestrode his friend's body, and received the descending blow upon his sword, saving thus the life of him who a moment before had saved his.

"Up with thee, Michael, and leave this monster to me," cried Wat, parrying a fierce blow which Grif made at him; "there are plenty of swords about, and plenty to use them on." Michael rose quickly, and, picking up Grif's weapon, plunged again into the fight; while Wat and Grif, without speaking, fought fiercely and uncompromisingly, each determined, if possible, to kill the other. Grif, after essaying every feint he was master of, and discovering himself foiled in all, and compelled to exercise all his skill in parrying the rapid and well-delivered blows of Wat, began, as in the wood when fighting with Wat, to lose all command of his temper; he gnashed his teeth, and foamed at the mouth with rage; gave every blow with all the might he was master of, and then remained unsuccessful. As he parried a quick and fierce blow dealt him by Wat, the sword slid swiftly down his own, and passing the hilt, took one of his little fingers nearly off; he roared in very ecstacy of rage, was nearly blind with fury, and there is little doubt would have soon fallen beneath Wat's weapon, but again a rush of combatants separated them; and Wat, panting from his exertion, turned to seek a new foe. He was at no loss to find one, and found it easier work to conquer him than he had to resist the tremendous efforts Grif had made to beat him down. The battle now raged at its deadliest height; the devils fought furiously, but as heaven had so ordained it, without even ordinary success—or rather with no success. Men who had frequently conquered expert swordsmen were cut down like grass beneath the scythe of the mower—almost with as much ease. Mark Grayling and his little band fought coolly, but with the deadliest determination; they were sternly silent, save now and then they uttered the word "Wrotham!" and then, if possible, their blows were more deadly than ever; one only of their number had fallen, but his death was amply revenged. The voice of Leowulf was heard every now and then animating his friends, cheering some bold act of one of his party, or promising a speedy death to Grif whenever he caught sight of him.

"Hurrah, lads, for the village we were born in, and mean to die in, but not to-night," he shouted. "Ho! ho! well done, Guthrie—a true Saxon's blow; down with him. Hurrah! done like a Saxon. Ho! ho! Brenchley is not taken yet. We are not all cut to pieces, nor don't mean to be. Ho! ho! that's five foot of fire-proved steel. The helm is not made that will stand against it. There, thou miserable devil, thou findest my words are true. Thus will I serve Grif, thy master, when I catch him. Aha! another foe? I like the look of you; you're the biggest I've had yet. Ho! ho! my bonny bright lady, mistress of my heart, perfection of my work and art! thou must try thy purity against this black-muzzled hound. Devil, thy doom is sealed. Hurrah!"

Thus continued he, talking and fighting, success invariably attending his efforts. He brandished his five foot of 'fire-proved steel,' just as though it was a willow wand, and dealt the most terrific blows with it, even as if he had been standing at his forge welding iron, and with as much ease and unconcern. His example did much in the villagers' favour, but there was still much to do. They had double their number opposed to them; but though they had double the determination, still it was not sufficient to make them victors. The time which Sir Walter Manny had promised to join them had passed—in their situation—by a considerable period, and Wat, though painfully disappointed, gave him up; although he resolved rather to perish than fly, still he shuddered as he reflected, in the event of his being killed, and the devils successful, what might be Violet's fate, and in the agony of the moment he prayed that Sir Walter would not deceive him, that he would come, although it might be at the last hour. If he came, he had no doubt of the victory: but as matters now stood, he feared and doubted the possibility of eventually being able to defeat the murderous wretches. He fought with the conviction of this strong upon him, and also with the idea that every one he defeated was adding something, however small, towards victory. While the impression was powerfully upon him, he thought of all the lessons and advice he had received from Halbert Evesham and Leowulf, and did his best to apply them. Just as he was adding another conquest to the number he had that night obtained, he heard his name repeated earnestly by Michael, and he, on the instant, turned to him, answering the call.

"Wat, Wat! do you not see? Look, look!" cried Michael with rapid utterance.

He gazed as Michael uttered his swift words, and the blood ran cold to his heart on seeing a lighted torch in the topmost window of Halbert Evesham's dwelling.

"Oh, God!" he exclaimed, "some of the monsters have attacked Violet's home!"

"And Flora's there!" cried Michael.

"Follow me, Michael. We are only two, but we may save them; and it is as much consequence for us to be there as here," he said energetically, though in an under tone.

"I don't care if we are but two, and they're a hundred up there. They shall cut me piecemeal before they harm a hair of Flora's head."

"Come along, then, as swiftly as you can. Do not let us be seen to quit, or they will think we are flying from fear."

"Every one was too much engaged to notice them, and when they got clear they grasped their swords firmly, and with the speed of greyhounds flew up to the spot which contained all that was dear to them on earth. It took them but little time to gain a spot a short distance from Halbert's dwelling, and then Wat stopped, checking Michael with his hand.

"Stay," he ejaculated, in a tone scarce above a whisper, "we will steal round by the back of the cottage; stratagem may do better than strength. The cottage door is well barred, and the windows well fastened; and as Violet and Flora's fears will make them do what the most judgmatical would counsel, they will not open the door; and while the devils are outside, the inmates are safe. There are a round number, if I can judge by the shadows moving; but they keep so close in the dark side of the house, I cannot distinguish them. I know plenty of places of ambush about the house, and if we can only contrive to let Violet know we are near, so as to quiet her fears, we may be able to give the ruffians surrounding the house a disastrous defeat.

"I am quite agreeable to follow your advice, because it seems best—but if you only knew how strangely I felt, Wat, you would not be surprised to hear me express a wish to be right at the rascals at once; my blood actually tingles, and I feel as if I could cut down a whole army myself, the more especially as Flora is in the immediate vicinity, and in danger too. I should feel as a giant—an invulnerable giant, who had nothing else to do but to cut the villains down, as if I was clearing a ground of weeds."

"I can understand your feeling, Michael, and am myself no less excited; but it would be madness in the present state of things to throw all discretion aside, for the sake of gratifying our impulses, natural though they be. No, we want numbers, and we must make caution, courage, and perseverance supply their place."

"You are right. I had forgotten that we are not invincible; and were we to fall, we expose Flora to all the rascalities the devils may inflict upon her—but they had better not touch her. Oh! that we had but a hundred stout fellows to help us—how we would scatter the reptiles. By-the-bye, where is Sir Walter Manny? you told me that you expected him—or at least said as much."

"And so I did expect him, and some of his men; but I suppose as he did not know for certain that the attack would be made to-night, he did not trouble himself to come, or perhaps he may think the cutting a few villagers to pieces, and the burning of a few cottages, a matter of no moment. Pish! I mean not so; he is not the man to be idle in such a cause—I wrong him—I wrong him—but I do feel hurt and disappointed that he is not here—if 'twere only for *her* sake. Well, well, we must do our best without him. Come along, Michael, cautiously, and let us do what we can. What matters it, if we are to die, whether we die fighting at the threshold of the door, or down by the Cross in the village? It is for Violet and Flora we hazard life and limb, so let us lay our lives down in their defence, where it may be of some service to them."

"With all my heart. And if shedding my best blood will save them from shame and ill, I will joyfully pour it forth like water."

"Give me your hand Michael—I have your heart, as you have mine! A few minutes hence, fate may ordain that we should part for ever, and if such should be the decree, let us have the last earthly grasp of friendship that can pass between us."

"There's my hand, Wat. I love you better than brother can brother, and if you should fall first, it will go hard but I lay a heap of foes breathless by your side. You will do the same by me?"

"I will bestride thy body, and will either fall dead upon it, or leave not one alive to boast he turned his hand against thine."

"I am sure of it. Let us to our task."

The two young men grasped each other's hands with a firm, earnest grip, and then proceeded to the cottage, with the full conviction that they should never escape alive the defence they were about to undertake. Wat drew his belt a little tighter, parted his hair from his forehead, took a firm fair hold of his sword's hilt, set his teeth hard, and stole swiftly, followed by Michael, in a circuitous direction to the cottage, in order that they might escape being seen until it was their advantage to be discovered. They quickly gained the grove of trees from which they had issued to destroy the band of devils sent by Grif to bear off Violet, and from thence, with extreme care and caution, they crept round the back of the dwelling until they were close enough to hear the tramping of impatient horses, and distinguish their riders. Wat Tyler no sooner got a clear view of them than he waved his sword, burst from his place of concealment, gave a short hysterical hurrah, and leaped among them, followed by Michael, who, albeit he did not understand the meaning of Wat's act, yet would have followed him if he had been certain of being the next moment killed. He was, however, not long left in doubt, for Wat cried loudly—

"Sir Walter Manny! Sir Walter Manny!"

"Here, here! Is that you, Wat Tyler?" replied the knight, in his rich-toned voice, which, as soon as it fell on Michael's ears, coupled with Wat's mention of his name, he accompanied by a loud groan of relief, and then a cheer at the very top of his voice—it was almost a shriek, his delight was so great—not a few of the horses shyed and pranced at the sound.

"Aye, Sir Walter," answered Wat to the knight's interrogatory. "It is Wat Tyler, and never was one human being so glad to see another as I am now to look on thee. I have prayed for thee. Thy presence and that of thy brave fellows is needed at once—there is not a moment to be lost; our friends are holding in check, and that right bravely too, twice their number, but I fear, without your aid, not for long."

"Aha! we have ridden hard, though we be late. Upon our arrival we heard the din and uproar of the fight, but as you wished me to keep our arrival secret, I waited here for you in silence. Albeit I knocked for admittance here, but although I have essayed knocks not many less than an hundred, I can get no reply, save a lighted torch hoisted at the top window."

"That is the reason of our being here," rejoined Wat. "There is only Violet and a female friend with Halbert, who lies on a sick couch, and we gave them strict directions to bar the door and windows, and admit no one, save I and my friend here—and not us, unless by our voices they were satisfied of our identity

—in case of attack a lighted torch would bring us to their aid, and here we are."

"Have you been in the fight, Wat?" asked Sir Walter.

Drawn by H. W. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

"I left it to come here."

"And saw some brisk play, and did some, I'll wager my spurs."

"If every one does as he has done, we shall not want your aid, for I have seen him cut two fellows down," said Michael, quickly.

"Or as you have done, Michael, we should have no cause to fear the devils."

"This is the youth of whom you spoke to me?" said Ulfred, addressing Sir Walter, and pointing to Wat Tyler.

"The same," was the reply.

"His appearance fully bears out all you say; I shall be glad to know thee—I have heard thee highly praised."

"Sir Walter Manny has been the kind friend who mentioned my name in undeserved terms."

"It was he who told me of thee, but I am sure what he said was not undeserved."

"I beg your pardon," chimed in Rupert, "for interfering; but I should like to shake hands with one younger than myself, who has done, and that right gallantly, so much more. One who desires to be a brave man should be proud to know those whose actions prove them such."

"Well said, Rupert," exclaimed Sir Walter, as Rupert leaned from his horse to shake Wat's hand.

"It is well said, and now's the time, if you desire to be a brave man, to show that you can be. Will you lead us to the fight, Wat Tyler?"

"Never had you a guide so willing. I will but assure Violet of her safety, and then attend you."

"There is the mindfulness of true love," muttered Sir Walter to himself; "ever considerate for her happiness. In her own words, still the same fond, faithful, affectionate friend—friend! um, rather more than that, I take it, but no less kind. Heigho! How say you, Rupert?" he exclaimed, loudly, "does your heart knock at your ribs, like a bird at the cage bars, with the wish to be far away?"

"It knocks at my ribs, I confess—but only to be down where that shouting and clashing is arising," replied Rupert.

Wat Tyler and Michael's voices were now heard in concert, bidding the fair but terrified inmates of the cottage cease their fears, for the battle would be speedily terminated in their favour; that they were both unhurt, and likely to continue so; at the same time counselling the removal of the torch from the window, where it had been placed. A feeble voice, which Michael knew to be Flora's, thanked them, and stated their great alarm, bidding them, for the love of heaven, to return as speedily and as safely as they could—a promise which they unequivocally made, and with their last kind cheering words of solace on their lips, they returned to Sir Walter, and declared themselves ready to lead on.

"Now, Wat, show your agility, for my bonny Tricksy snuffs fighting, and when once in motion, I shall have work to hold him."

"Will he carry us both?"

"A good thought—vault up behind me; your friend can do the same upon one of my trooper's horses."

"Behind me, if he pleases," said Ulfred.

"I care not whom, so that I am not left behind," said Michael.

"Then behind Ulfred be it," exclaimed Sir Walter.

In another minute Wat and Michael were seated behind Sir Walter and Ulfred, who, obeying Wat's directions, dashed to the scene of strife and bloodshed.

During the temporary absence of Wat Tyler and Michael, the battle had been maintained with the most determined and obstinate vigour on both sides. Warmed into the deadly work, every man did his part with ferocious desperation, and the ground was strewed with the wounded, the dead, and dying: but there was no comparison in the numbers which each side had lost; for twice, at least, as many of Grif's men had fallen as of the villagers. He was not slow in discovering his loss, nor doing the best he could to repair it, by such stratagems as his knowledge of warfare led him to adopt, and which he felt sure would succeed, when employed against a set of villagers who were totally unacquainted with the manœuvres war made necessary; but his rage may be imagined, when he beheld them all foiled through the address of the mysterious stranger with the burning snake illuming his helm, and making him a distinguished object among the crowd of combatants. He easily guessed that in him he saw a most determined foe; but who could he be? A sensation of awe crossed him every time his eyes encountered him, fighting with steady but most deadly determination; and he felt that his was the unknown hand who had inflicted death upon his followers at Tonbridge, in his cave, and in the wood; but who could he be? Many names rose in reply, but were dismissed; when suddenly, from association of the name, and the symbol this mysterious being employed, it struck him that it was the spirit of Mat Snake, whom he had shot for endeavouring to quit the band, and whose body had so strangely disappeared. He tried to laugh it away as ridiculously absurd, but it would cling to him, and robbed him of much of the coolness which was necessary for him to possess, in conducting his men to victory. Each time, as he strove to drive it from his mind, the words of Martin du Bois recurred forcibly to him, "that he would some day have good cause to acknowledge that there were devils less real, but no less terrible, than his own men." Was this one of them? Had Martin spoken truth? Then he swore roundly at himself for believing such stuff; but during the whole of the fight he studiously avoided coming in contact with him, though the stranger made the most strenuous efforts to bring their meeting to pass. He felt satisfied that Grif avoided him, and shrewdly attributed it to the right cause; and the reflection made him, consequently, the more earnest in his endeavour to encounter him. He owed Grif the deadliest vengeance, and strove to compass his death, if within human means, and saw no time so fit for the execution of his project as the present—more particularly as he believed that the death of this monster would terminate a conflict already too severe to be pleasant to the devils. He therefore used his best exertion to cut his way to him, and once nearly succeeded; but Grif observed him, and waving his sword, plunged into another part of the fighting throng. Here he confronted Leowulf, who, with Mark Grayling and a party of his friends by his side, was fighting in his old fashion, brandishing his tremendous sword, and destroying whomsoever he struck with it.

"Ho! ho!" shouted Leowulf, the instant his eyes alighted on Grif; "thou bloody-handed villain! thou flinty-hearted fiend! Ho! ho! Now, all thanks to Woden! I have thee at last, thou bloodhound without its courage; come on, thou sneaking cur; thou shalt learn that it is not always safe to attack honest men's homes i'the dark. Ho! ho! my sword leaps and bounds in my hand—it knows there is one within its range whose doom it is to inflict. Come on; ho! ho!"

"Thou talkest too much, slave," roared Grif, passionately, "I am not to be killed by thee! Thy sword shall leap and bound out of thy hand in a thousand pieces, thou babbling dog, ere thou'rt a minute older."

"Ho! ho!" scornfully returned Leowulf, dealing a tremendous blow with his weapon, which, though Grif parried, made him stagger backwards. "The metal is not forged that could do the deed. This noble blade was forged while a charm was uttered and an offering made—the offering was accepted. Ho! ho! break it?—look to thy head thou wolfish hound!" and again he levelled a blow which, though Grif was prepared to receive, made him reel as if he

had been stricken with a bar of iron. He found that he must employ much agility and no little caution, to enable him to defeat one who had beaten every man who had as yet opposed him; but although he used all his dexterity, he found himself still far from success and rather fatigued; while Leowulf flourished away as though it was not in his nature ever to be tired. At length Grif received some unexpected assistance; one of his followers, armed with a large axe, brought for the purpose of beating in the doors of the cottage, seeing the combat between his leader and the Saxon, and fancying that the former had the worst of it, struck with all his might sideways at Leowulf's sword, and sent it flying from his grasp; Grif, on the instant, made a desperate cut at him, which, with a bound he avoided, and sprung upon the devil who had committed the deed; with the strength of a giant he wrested his axe from him, and disdaining to cleave him to the middle as he was now unarmed, having lost his weapon, turned with all speed upon Grif, who was just making ready to cut him down, and hacked away at him furiously with his new weapon. Mark Grayling, who had witnessed this last transaction, saw the devil who had caused it pick up Leowulf's mighty sword; he immediately relinquished the fellow he was at cut-and-thrust with to a companion who was looking for a foe, and rushed at the devil with the Saxon's weapon in his possession. The fellow met him with a swing of this huge weapon, which had the effect of disarming him; but his antagonist found Leowulf's sword something too much for him, and was unable to recover himself from the effects of the prodigious force of the swing, when Mark bounded on him, and with little difficulty, succeeded in getting it out of his hands; he was unable to retain it, for the devil seized him by the throat the moment he lost it, and he found in such a situation he could not wield it; he therefore relinquished it, and returned the fellow's grip with a tremendous blow in the face from his clenched fist, which made his antagonist's eyes rain water, but not to quit his hold. Mark then seized him by the throat, and both struggled to throw the other with all the force they could exert; they twisted round and round, each with his eyes ready to start out of their sockets, until at length the devil's foot was tripped up by a dead body, and they both fell heavily; each, however, retained his hold, and they rolled over and over, until by sheer strength Mark succeeded in raising himself up, and drawing his skean from his belt, plunged it again and again into the body of his prostrate foe, whose hands tightened with the agony of the wounds he received, then relaxed, loosened, and fell off. When Mark rose up, his opponent was dead.

At this moment there was a great shout from the friends behind him; he turned quickly round and beheld the stranger, standing upon the base of the cross, and heard him cry—

"The victory is ours—behold!"

Mark looked in the direction in which he pointed, and saw Sir Walter Manny and his companions galloping down the hill leading from Halbert Evesham's dwelling, no less to his surprise than joy; the words he heard, too, went every one to his heart; it was Sir Walter's voice, ringing loudly so as to be heard by all—

"A Manny! a Manny! to the rescue! down with the black knaves! down with them, my gallant hearts, drive them before you!"

The villagers raised a shout which might have been heard miles away, as they heard the cry and saw the welcome assistance arrive; and those who, according to the orders of the stranger, had staid in reserve, now dashed forward with energy to crush their invaders at one effort. The devils gave ground rapidly. Wat Tyler slipped from Sir Walter's steed in an instant, and, followed by Michael, who imitated his example, was quickly at the head of a band of villagers routing the devils, who had not calculated upon this extraordinary accession of strength, and seeing a long train of stalwart troopers come dashing among them, dealing death and destruction at every blow, thought it little better than madness to stand their ground; they therefore commenced retreating.

Leowulf had beaten Grif upon his knees, and was bidding him pray for mercy hereafter for all the villanies he had committed, giving him time only while he flourished the axe to repeat them, when the sudden rush of the retreating devils, closely pressed by the villagers, swept him from the fate Leowulf had designed him, and the blow which was descending lopped off the arm of one of Grif's men, who dropped like lightning to the ground. The slaughter now became frightful; the devils were in full retreat, but contesting every step with mad desperation; while the villagers, elated at the succour they had received, dashed on regardless of all order, feeling that success was certain. Sir Walter Manny, whose name was already a terror to the foe, did indeed, as he had promised Wat, show the band sport: his exertions were tremendous, while his war-horse Tricksy most ably seconded all his intentions, scattering the enemy wherever he approached them. Ulfred fought like a tiger; he shouted out the word "Wrotham" as he cut several fellows down, and his words, or, as he made it, war-cry, was quickly caught up by Mark Grayling's friends, and warmly echoed in the fray. Mark came near him, heard him, and recognised his face, as the bright moon shone on it.

"You were the King's messenger, for whom the people of Wrotham fought?"

"I am," he returned, "and am repaying, to the best of my ability, the wrongs they have suffered through me."

"God bless you!" cried Mark, earnestly, "you have repayed the obligation. Down with the dogs! strike for Wrotham! no quarter! Slay and spare not those who spared not our relatives and dearest friends."

"Down with them!" roared the villagers.

"A Manny! a Manny!" cried the troopers, doing their work coolly, but effectively.

Soon many of the devils began to disperse in open fight, but the bulk still kept together as well as they were able, until Grif shouted, in a stentorian voice—

"Devils, to the wood! to the wood! we may there defy a hundred Sir Walter Mannys: to the wood!"

"Not so fast," exclaimed Sir Walter, "we have not done with you yet. Ho, there, my bold troopers!" he shouted, "follow me!—spur, spur!—cut them off from the wood!—wheel to their front—let not one escape!"

He galloped swiftly through a portion of them, Tricksy defying all impediments, and soon headed the devils; he was quickly followed by his men, and all retreat to the wood was cut off. The devils were completely hemmed in, and nothing was left for them but to sell their lives as dearly as they could, for there seemed no disposition on the part of the villagers or the troopers to grant quarter. Some of the oldest members of the band adopted this last alternative coolly, but by far the greater proportion would have thrown their arms and surrendered on any terms, but the constant recurrence of the cry from Mark Grayling and his friends, and from the mysterious stranger, of "No quarter!" led them to doubt whether they

should not be slaughtered, even if they cast away their weapons; and so, until some prospect of their lives being granted to them on submission presented itself, they determined to continue fighting; but even this stern resolve, for certain death was in it, availed them little: they were completely surrounded, and they universally roared for quarter; but it was sternly denied, and that most strenuously by the stranger, who seemed as if he could not sufficiently glut himself with their slaughter. But when their numbers were thinned to a horrifying extent, and the ground was strewed with their bodies, dead and dying, after earnest and abject appeals for mercy, Sir Walter Manny interfered, and prevailed upon the villagers to grant it upon consideration of an unconditional surrender, to which the defeated devils instantly agreed, and they at once threw down their weapons. The troopers were called off, the villagers arranged themselves in a curved line or semi-circle, and the surviving devils marched, as they were ordered, two and two, to a lane made by two lines of troopers, who were to have the charge of them. The most earnestly looked for among them was Grif of the Bloody Hand, but he was nowhere to be seen, and it was conjectured that he was among the slain. Many of the devils were questioned respecting him, but all denied knowledge of him, save one, who sullenly acknowledged he had seen him cut down by a trooper. An exclamation of disappointment escaped the stranger, who was most eager in his enquiries after him, and he announced his intention of making a rigid search among the wounded and dead for the object of his bitter, unquenchable hatred; a determination to which no one offered the slightest objection, and Leowulf, only, offered co-operation.

"The ill-looking, ill-doing ruffian!" he exclaimed; "I had rather a tough bout with him, and would have ensured laying him as rank carrion as any that are motionless there, if I had not been robbed of my trusty sword by an ungainly, cowardly villain; this axe, though it did something, did little to what my bonny blade would have done on Grif's black hide; but it might have done all required of it, but for the sudden charge of our gallant friends. Wheugh! over went everything, as they rushed forward, like reeds and weak shrubs before a gale of wind, and away they bore my black-muzzled foe. Ho! ho! if he had but stood a little longer—only a little longer—I would have so scored his visage that his bosom friends—God preserve me from such boon companions!—should not have recognised him, when they gathered up his hacken frame to fling it into some hastily-digged hole; however, it was not my fault; he may yet be living, and be found by us, and if he should, I will take him to my smithy, cure his wounds, fatten him up—ho! ho!—and then, when he is as strong as ever, I will give him a good weapon, a fair ground, and we will try who is the best in a life and death bout, for the victor alone shall live. Ho! ho! if he has escaped the grim King Death, and the emperor of the infernal regions now, he shall not then—he shall not then!"

"If we should find him among the wounded," uttered the stranger in a tone of decision, "I have reserved a different fate for him than that you intend him; if he be among the slain, then shall his vile carcase hang upon the tall branches of an oak tree which stands in the forest, until the birds of prey have left nought but his bones to rattle and whiten in the blast."

"You have reserved a different fate!" echoed Leowulf, with some surprise, not unmixed with annoyance at the authoritative manner of the stranger, "and where is your right greater than mine, that you should dispose of him as you please, in opposition to my expressed intentions."

"In being the greatest sufferer by his vile deeds; in being on his track for years, with the hope of working out the vengeance I owe and have sworn to inflict on him; which, could it be gratified by his death alone, he had perished long since; but my revenge will not be satisfied with so poor an oblation. Lives he still, I know that of him, one act alone, independent of all the monstrous villanies he has been guilty of—unaffected by the misery which he has poured on me—which will, when he is delivered into the hands of justice, place him upon the rack, and when released from the tortures of that dreaded instrument, consign him to the common hangman, who shall not send him swinging alone from the gallows-tree, for he shall have a companion; aye, a companion, who even now gnaws his hands in secret, as he broods o'er the time that must come which shall see him, now exalted, in exaltation to which the lowest depths of poverty and misery will be a state of envy. Leave this Grif to me, good Leowulf. Trust me, it is for good cause that I have for years devoted myself to his destruction; and were you to know him the villain he really is, you would no longer desire to stain your unalloyed weapon in his base blood."

"Well, well, I doubt not that you speak truth," returned Leowulf, somewhat appeased, "and will yield to you the right to do as it seemeth best to you with him; nay, will even assist you in your search for him with the same intent. But I confess I should like to have had a fair trial with him, if it is only to see if I am not stronger—for I ought to be—i'the arm and grip, than young Wat, the noble lad."

"You may try that question at a more fitting time, and on a better subject," urged the stranger. "Now to our task. See the troopers have all that remain of the band in safe custody, and if we lose time he may be carried off among the wounded, ere we get sight of him."

"I am with you," was the brief reply; and together they went to their unpleasant task of searching among the dying and the dead, for him who had caused all this bloodshed.

"The victory is decisive as victory can be," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny to Wat Tyler; "nor do I think you will again, for some time, be troubled with such rascals as we have here prisoners. My fellows shall take them up to London; and, if Edward spares the hangman the labour of swinging them to eternity, he will ship them off among the troops to be cut down by foreign foes at some future time. By the mass! if I were a villain, I would at least be a bold one; but these cut throats are but as a pack of wolves, brave enough when they are the stronger side, and know themselves to be so, but coward knaves when boldly opposed, and a chance, however slight, starts up against them. Well, they are caught pretty handsomely in their own trap; and, if the survivors have a chance of doing the like again, it will not be without taking a little more precaution. What have you done with the women, the children, and the aged? For, to look upon the dwellings, it seems as if all the living inhabitants of Brenchley were assembled around us: not a sound or a light is moving."

"Such of the females, the old and young, who were dwelling near this spot, are in the chapel, to which, as a last resort, had we been unsuccessful, all the others, now in their dwellings, would have repaired; and such of us as escaped the slaughter here would have died, sword in hand, upon its sacred threshold, defending those within, who would, when we to the last man had been cut down, have fired an enormous

pile of pine wood, which has been placed in front of the altar, and there have perished by their own hands, rather than have trusted to the mercies of Grif and his band."

"By heaven! a noble resolve;" ejaculated Sir Walter, warmly.

"But from which, thanks to you, we are preserved," said Wat.

"And to the bounty of Providence," returned Sir Walter. "Well, what is to be done with the wounded?"

"Such as are of the village who have been so unfortunate as to be hurt will be tended by their own families; while those of Grif's band must be carried to some large out-house, and there receive such care as their hurts may require."

"And the dead?"

"Of our friends, they will be collected, and, with every honour and respect we can show them, be interred in the chapel; while a deep pit will be dug for the bodies of those who proposed such injury to us, and therein cast."

"You have made all your arrangements, and with no little skill or cool calculation."

"We left nothing undone which foresight could perceive necessary for our success in the conflict, and for its after-consequences. Had we been defeated, we should have needed nothing but a prayer for our souls."

"Very true. What is to be done with the prisoners? Have you any place to keep them safely in? Did you think of that among your arrangements?"

"No, I acknowledge we did not. We did not anticipate such an event: we thought only of driving the devils from our village—not of capturing them. But it is an exigency easily met. There is an out-house attached to my father's house which will contain them, and they may be safely guarded by a few men."

"It is well. There is not a fellow in my troop who does not boast some little skill in chirurgery. They can, after they have safely disposed of their prisoners, lend their assistance to such of the wounded as need it. I suppose you have not many in the village who profess to be chirurgeons?"

"No; therefore the assistance of your followers will be of value, and prized accordingly. Our unhurt companions are all now together, and we will, therefore, at once assist the wounded to their homes, and render them all the attention in our power."

"Ha! what means that sound?" inquired Sir Walter Manny, hastily, as the shrill notes of a horn suddenly sounded loud and clearly.

"It is to let those in the chapel know the danger is over," he replied. "Ere long they will be wending to their homes again. But excuse me, Sir Walter, this is no time for idle talk; I must do my part to assist those who need help. If you will to my father's, you will there find refreshment for you and your two friends. It shall not be long before your followers shall also have some good cheer placed before them; but the wounded require our first thought, and that will, I trust, prove a satisfactory excuse for any inattention which for the next hour I may show you."

"Know me for no slave of ceremony, my good Wat. I am a soldier, think and feel as a soldier, and look only for what a soldier expects, and that partakes of little of the mincing courtesy which a court dangler looks for; I prefer your frankness; you to your work, and I will see my men do theirs fittingly. The prisoners must first be escorted to their stronghold, and then their wounded comrades shall be carried to the place designed for them; by that time I daresay you will be free to meet me at your father's house."

"I trust so, and will do my best endeavour."

"So be it; but my friend Ulfred and his young cousin may as well seek the hospitality thy father so generously bestows at once."

"We may be of assistance," suggested Ulfred, quickly.

"Yes," readily responded Rupert. "Shew us in what way we can help you, and we will gladly do it. I may yet learn something more, and I want to learn what I can before I begin my first campaign."

"Thou hast no need to blush for thy deeds to-night, Rupert," exclaimed Sir Walter, commendingly; "they would have graced an old soldier."

"I am proud of your praise, Sir Walter," he replied.

"It is deserved," quietly observed Ulfred.

"I did what I could to imitate you both," responded Rupert. "I shall do better in the second essay."

At this moment Michael came up to them, panting for breath. As soon as he could recover himself so far as to give utterance to his words, he said,

"I have been up there, Wat, and saw them both. What do you think? They had been hard at work to prevent Halbert Evesham coming to mix in the fight. He vowed by all the saints above, he would not be absent where a single arm was of such service; but Flora guarded the door, and maintained her position stoutly, bless her heart! I gave her for that such a—at least, they were striving to pacify him, when I arrived with the news of our complete success, and that quieted him. Oh, if you knew the questions I have had to answer, you would wonder how I got back so quick. Poor Violet! if ever there was an angel on earth, she is one; she looks so like one, just now; her face so pale, and her eyes glistening with the water that stood in them; and she asked so tenderly, so affectionately, after you, seemed so delighted, at least in her quiet way, that you were safe, and went down on her knees to thank the Almighty for his bounteousness. Nobody will go straight to Heaven if she don't; at least that's my opinion, and against all the world I'll maintain it. Of course I did not tell her that you were wounded, because it would have made her uneasy."

"Are you wounded, Wat?" cried Sir Walter Manny, who, despite the interest which the name of Violet awakened in him, could not but be amused at Michael's manner of telling his news, but was startled on hearing the latter portion of it.

"Aye, a little—'tis nothing."

"Where does the wound lie? your face looks so pale, I am rather inclined to believe your hurt is something."

"Nay, 'tis not much. A fellow who joined a comrade that I was fighting, made a sharp thrust at me with his sword, which I avoided; but not sufficiently to prevent its going through the fleshy part of my arm."

"Have you not bound it?"

"I have had no time."

"Pshaw! do it at once; it still bleeds, I'll wager, by the ashiness of your face. Here," he cried, holding to him a handkerchief, which he drew from his vest, "let me bind this tightly round it and stop the effusion of blood, the loss of which, from that nothing, as you term it, will cost you a month's strength."

"I do feel rather faint," ejaculated Wat.

"No wonder; your sleeve is soaked with blood. He would be a strong man who could bear it without being affected by it. There, that will hold it for the

present. To thy home at once, Wat, and have it properly done, if you would wish it to be no more than nothing."

"I am not so weak but what I can do my share of the duty others are performing. There are many now no less hurt, perhaps more so than I, helping to bear the wounded to their homes, and I will not shrink from my post because I do not feel so strong as usual."

"Do as thou wilt," said Sir Walter, with a slight laugh. "You are one of those who will not be persuaded out of what they deem right, and I quite agree with the feeling—they are not very successful who try the like with me; still, delay no longer than you can avoid before you dress it properly. That is your friend whom I this morning met in the village, is it not?"

"It is my friend, my first and dearest. He saved my life this night, an act I am not disposed easily to forget."

"Ha, ha! Wat, and the next moment you saved mine—so you owe me nothing. Violet told me to say, when your aid is no longer needed here, that she would be glad to see you, very glad—pshaw! that's not the word, but I can't remember it if I try—glad, at least something more than that is the meaning of it, and so you can understand what I ought to have recollected. I told her you would be sure to come, because I knew you would, and so shall I. I told her Sir Walter Manny was with us—"

"And what said she?" asked Sir Walter, eagerly, with a slight forgetting.

"Why, I told her that it was in no small degree owing to your timely and gallant aid that we were victors; which was true, Wat, was it not?"

"It was," answered Wat, who was not slow to notice the quickness with which Sir Walter asked the question, or that his eyes, even in the pale moonlight, might be seen to sparkle with an additional brilliancy as he made the inquiry. The appeal to Wat, however, restored him to his recollection, and it was with an affected ease, which, albeit, did not deceive our hero, that he heard Michael continue—

"And when I told her this, she said it was like you; you were always doing noble actions, and some other fine things which I don't recollect, but were very flattering to you."

"I am much bound to the gentle Violet for her handsome opinion of me," observed Sir Walter, with a smile, and then uttered quickly, "but we are detaining you from your duties; we shall meet an hour hence at your abode, Wat."

"Even so," replied Wat, waving his hand in answer to Sir Walter's salutation, as he galloped away accompanied by his two friends, and just heard Rupert exclaim—

"I am glad I have seen something more of the peasantry than I did at home. I beg leave most unequivocally to recant the opinion I held of them formerly."

Wat and Michael now lent their aid to bear the wounded to their respective dwellings; the signal agreed on to acquaint those who bore, and could bear no part in the fray, that victory had declared for them, was heard, and many came out to lend their assistance to the sufferers; torches were kindled, although the bright moonlight made it almost unnecessary to use them, and every one unhurt, and a few hurt, spared no trouble to bestow comfort and attention where it was needed. Of all the villagers one only was killed, although there were many severely wounded, while at least a fourth of the devils were slain, a very large number very badly wounded, and but few altogether unhurt; nor should this seeming disparity excite wonder, when it be remembered, that with the exception of two or three charges, the latter were fighting upon the defensive—rather trying to save themselves than to kill others, or not so much bent on slaughter when they found themselves opposed, as to incapacitate their opponents from resisting them, by inflicting severe wounds upon as many as they could and passing on to others; but even this intention they could not work out, for they were so fiercely battled by the little band from Wrotham, and by all who were led by the stranger, or within the influence of Leowulf's exciting example and words, that they found themselves fully occupied in defending instead of attacking; thus it was so many of the villagers escaped a death which otherwise would probably have been their lot, and the robbers incurred it; for the villagers had such fearful cause to nerve their arms when they struck, that the stricken might not have the chance of again attempting a villany they were now striving their utmost to perpetrate. When Sir Walter Manny joined, with his troop, the massacre—for it was little else—became general, an act which, though it might be called cruel, was necessary. The devils lost courage, fought wildly, despairingly, and were cut down with ease, and thus produced the disparity in the number of killed and wounded in the two parties.

The troop escorting the prisoners made their way, led by Sir Walter, to the dwelling of Wat's parents, and were there safely placed in the outhouse mentioned by him; who, while they were gone, had, assisted by Michael, carried Wilfred, the youth who declared he would like to strike a blow for Violet, with a deeply slashed shoulder, to his home: as they returned to fetch another who lay wounded, they heard a loud shout, and running forward to ascertain its meaning, saw two or three of the devils, who had fallen and laid apparently dead, making for the wood at the top of their speed; they were hotly pursued by the stranger, who was foremost, by Leowulf, and three or four others. A couple of Sir Walter's men were sent for, and came; but although they urged their steeds at their swiftest pace, the pursued and the pursuers entered the wood before they could overtake them.

The task of conveying the wounded was completed, and the dead were gathered into one ghastly heap, ready the next morning to be inhumed in a deep pit, to be dug for the purpose, save the villager, who, perhaps fortunately, had no relatives, none but friends to mourn his loss. He was borne to the cottage he had, until this night, lived in; and then Wat, accompanied by Michael, bent their steps to Halbert Evesham's cottage. They were not long in reaching it. The door, at their well-known voices, flew open, and upon the threshold they were met and welcomed by Violet and Flora, with words and gestures evincing how strong was their interest in the two youths they thus greeted.

"Heaven has heard my prayers, dear Wat," exclaimed Violet, fervently; "and the wicked intentions of those lawless men have not prevailed. I have no terms adequate to express my thankfulness to the bounty of the Almighty, or to the courage of our gallant friends and neighbours who have preserved us from horrors I shudder even to imagine."

"There is much to be thankful for, dear Violet," he said in reply, "for we have not only frustrated the invaders' diabolical scheme—have revenged as much as there was a possibility of doing the slaughtered, tortured, inhabitants of Wrotham; but we have delivered the neighbourhood from the pest of

having the villains in the vicinity, and of being in a perpetual state of alarm, for fear of a like attack coming at a time perhaps when we had no means nor power to defend ourselves."

"Aha, you say true, Wat;" cried Michael, joining in the conversation, after indulging in a little love passage with Flora; "there's no chance of the rascals troubling us again."

"You have punished them so severely, then, that you have frightened them away for ever?" suggested Flora.

"Something more than that, Flora," said Michael, rubbing his hands with much delight; "those who are not killed and wounded are prisoners."

"Save two or three, who feigned death until the battle was ended, and then they started up, and fled with all their fleetness to the wood," observed Wat.

"Yes, with Leowulf, some lads, and the stranger with the snake-crested helmet, sticking tight to their skirts," said Michael, laughing. "I warrant me, by this time, they have found it would have been the safer plan to have surrendered themselves prisoners. By Father Gregory's frown! and that's no light oath, that stranger is an odd character; it is lucky we had him—it almost turned my blood to see the intense satisfaction he exhibited in killing the devils; none that he attacked escaped him, and I would give little for the chance the poor devils who fled to the wood will have in escaping his sanguinary clutches. That helmet was a strange and horrible affair; that frightened a good many. I shall ask Father Gregory about that. I say, Flora, I did not tell you that we had somebody that nobody knew, except Wat, and he did not *know* him, only a little by chance; well, he was dressed all in black, like the devils, had a mask on, through which his eyes glared as fiercely as firebrands—"

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed Flora, with a shudder. "How frightful! I hope you didn't go near him?"

"Nonsense! I tell you he was with us, fighting against the robbers. Well, upon a steel head-piece he had a snake of blue flame twisting and twirling about; sometimes it was almost invisible, then it would appear again as bright as ever. I don't exactly understand what it means, but I don't think it was earthly, for one thing,—"

"Oh, Michael! if Wat knows him, or is on speaking terms with him, he might pay us a visit," said Flora, keeping very close to Michael. "And if he did, I should die of fright—I know I should—wouldn't you, Violet?"

"I cannot say, until I saw him," smiled Voilet.

"You would have no desire to see him again," observed Michael, with a significant nod of the head. "But as I was saying, I don't think him earthly; but don't think he was the —— you know who, because he fought on the side of oppressed innocence, meaning the ladies, not the lads, of the village; and if he had been the nameless, he wouldn't have done that. But let him be who he may, a spectre or a magician, he did us good service, and I'll always speak a good word and think well of him; but I shall most certainly ask Father Gregory a question or two about this snake upon his helmet; it was very mysterious, and looked wondrously like dealings with the Old One."

"You will not be the only one by many who will ask Father Gregory that question, I doubt not," said Wat. "But you may spare yourself the trouble, if your curiosity will allow you to wait awhile. The mystery is easily explained. It is done by a simple process, which I will some other time tell you; there is no magic, or dealings with the Evil One, requisite to produce it; and if that is your only criterion for believing him a spectre or magician, do away with the foolish notion at once. I believe in no spectres but those which are raised in the conscience by ill doings, and if every one was to think so, the world would be better and wiser. Believe the stranger to be only as he told you, a man labouring under a heavy load of injuries, and without waiting for the justice of heaven overtaking those who have done him wrong at last—an administration of punishment which his sufferings making him deem too tardy—he has devoted his life to the working out of his revenge—there, you have all his mystery."

"But why does he affect that strangeness of dress?" inquired Violet.

"The better to bear out his intention," returned Wat. "In the garb of a devil he was less likely to be detected, if seen in the wood by one of the band, than if otherwise attired; and his symbol of the snake, I imagine, is figurative of some injury received by him, and he adopts it to let those connected with the persons on whom his vengeance falls, know who is the executor."

"Is this the person, Wat, of whom you spoke to me this morning?" asked Violet, her countenance expressing no little interest in the answer.

"It is."

"And you have seen him since, and—nay, the scene at which you both assisted to-night was no time to ask the question; but you—you will see him again?" exclaimed Violet.

"Not while he is with us, I hope," ejaculated Flora, looking half shudderingly over her shoulder at the door. "I don't want to see him. And if I was Wat, I should be in no hurry to be in his company, I can assure you."

"I saw him to-night in the wood before the fray, and I did not forget you," said Wat, his voice suddenly becoming low and almost inaudible.

"You never do," responded Violet, looking gratefully in his face. "And what said he?"

"He accorded the permission you wished, and—and—"

"Merciful heaven! Wat, how ashy pale you are. Help, Michael, help—he is dying," screamed Violet, suddenly, as she saw Wat's face became ghastly white, his lips turn colourless, and his eyes half close; he staggered, and Michael, startled by her cry, sprang forward, and caught him as he fell insensible. "Oh, Holy Virgin! He's dead, he's dead!" shrieked Violet, wringing her hands bitterly; "and I have been the cause, I—I who would have given my life to save him pain."

"Nay, nay, Violet!" exclaimed Michael, soothingly, as he laid Wat carefully on the floor, supporting his head on his knee, "be not alarmed, it is but a faint; he is wounded in the arm, and is weak from the loss of blood. Look to her, Flora, she will faint too—quick, quick!—some water." It was at hand—Flora flew to get it, and in a moment returned, giving it into the hand of Violet, judging shrewdly that employment and the excitement of striving to restore Wat would keep her from swooning.

"There, Violet," she said hurriedly, setting her the example, "there, bathe his temples, he will soon revive—I will chafe the palms of his hands. That is well, he will soon recover."

Violet made a strong effort to master the faintness which the horror of seeing Wat swoon had caused, and the earnest desire to assist in his recovery aided her endeavours with some success. She applied the water to his temples; and the first shock over, her energy returned, and she was unremitting in her

exertions to revive him. After the lapse of a few minutes, which seemed hours, he moved his head from side to side, began to breathe heavily, and then, opening his eyes, stared wildly round.

"Come Wat, Wat!" exclaimed Michael, cheeringly, "what are you thinking about, eh? What! sleeping before damsels—come, come, take heart and jump up."

"What means all this?" cried Wat, starting to his feet, but staggering almost to falling, from weakness. "I thought I—I—"

"Never mind what you thought," interrupted Michael, supporting him. "Here's the bandage slipped from your arm—and, Holy Mary! how the blood has been gushing—no wonder this has happened."

"Have I been dreaming?" faintly, and with wandering eyes, asked Wat.

"You are better, dear Wat," breathed Violet, and then turning to Michael, saying reproachfully—

"Why did you not tell me he was wounded? Is it dangerous? Tell me, I implore you—tell me the truth—hide nothing from me; let me know the worst at once. I have killed him—I have killed him!"

"What is all this, Violet? why these tears?" said Wat, doing his best to appear unaffected by the intense faintness he felt, but unsuccessfully, the tones of his voice being scarcely audible.

"Oh, Wat, you are wounded—you are wounded!" she cried, convulsively. "I feared so, although I prayed that you should be restored to me unharmed. Most earnestly, most devoutly did I invoke heaven for thy safety, but in vain—in vain."

"Do not take on so, Violet; it is only a flesh wound, and will soon heal," said Michael. "He is weak from loss of blood, but will be well to-morrow. Come, let me lead thee home, Wat; and, Flora, do me the kindness to remain here until I return."

"I shall see."

"No; but do."

"It is very likely I may."

"A thousand thanks. Come, Wat, lean on me; you are knocked up. The strongest will be at times, you know; and you have done enough to wear out the very strongest. Nay, never look down; cheer thee, a night's sleep will do away with this vile weakness; remember thou didst not sleep last night."

"Oh, no, no, no! he did not; 'twas to spare me fatigue," uttered Violet, hurriedly. "Oh, Michael, do not leave him, sit by him all night; watch him as he would you, if you were wounded or ill—watch him closely and tenderly; it is a kindness he will never forget."

"With all my heart, if his mother will let me; but she loves him so dearly I don't think she would let any one but herself wait on him or watch by him."

"Think no more about it," muttered Wat, unable, notwithstanding his most strenuous efforts, to speak beyond a whisper. "I have a great weakness on me, now, I own, but it will be gone by the morn. I need no one to watch. I feel strangely powerless, and nothing but that feeling should induce me to leave you, Violet, until I had told you—"

"Nay, dear Wat, some other time," interrupted Violet, let "Michael bear thee to thy couch, and as you love me, do nought to retard your recovery by quitting it until you are strong enough. Stay no longer now—to your home, for my sake, dear Wat. God bless and restore you."

Wat pressed her extended hands, and smiled faintly as he bent his dim eyes upon her, and breathed lowly—"Heaven bless you, Violet! fear not; if I am weak, I am happy, for the tender interest you show for me. In the morning I shall be well. Michael, I am ready—farewell."

Violet rang his clammy hands, but could not speak a word, and Flora was ready to cry with sympathy. Michael led him gently along to the threshold of the door, and then whispered to Flora—

"Mind you stop!"

"I am going to stay here and sleep. I have promised Violet, and got leave from home," she replied.

"Then I shall not say good night; I shall be back again."

"Nonsense! think of your mother, how alarmed she'll be; get home as quick as you can."

"I called there as I came here to tell you of the victory; so there's no need. I shall come direct here."

"But you won't be admitted; so say good night now."

"Do not tarry, Michael," said Violet, urgently; viewing, with no little impatience, this colloquy between the two lovers.

"I am off," said Michael, and whispered to Flora, "I shall come back."

"Good night," said Violet; "you are not hurt, I hope?"

"The graceless never are," exclaimed Flora, who had long since asked the same question, and had it satisfactorily answered.

"You would have stood a poor chance if that was truth," said Michael, quickly. "The devils would have been kicking up fine games here now: the graceless have suffered to-night. I am not hurt, Violet, thank you; good night."

"Good night," said Flora.

"Good night," responded Michael, and then said, in an under tone, "for the present."

"Till to-morrow," cried Flora, quickly.

Michael waved his hand, and led Wat, who had barely strength to move away; while Violet stood and watched their slow departure. When he had got a short distance from the cottage, he stopped and looked back, beckoned with his finger to Flora, calling her by name at the same time; she ran to him, and upon enquiring why he called, he said, with affected gravity—

"I may as well tell you, Flora; perhaps it will be best—I am wounded."

"You are," she exclaimed, earnestly. "Where?"

"In the heart, by your eyes."

"Is that all you called me for?"

"Exactly, and quite enough, too."

"Don't come back, for as true as I live, I'll close the door in your face," and away she ran.

"I will," shouted Michael, as she left him.

Even Wat, who felt little inclination for mirth, smiled; for he was cognizant of what transpired, though too faint too speak. Michael led him as though he was guiding a tender child, and after some little time they reached Wat's home. Here they encountered Sir Walter Manny, Ulfred, and Rupert. A few words from Michael explained Wat's situation, and he was borne to his couch. Sir Walter sent for one of his men, who possessed great skill in dressing wounds, and when he arrived, after washing the blood clear from the wound and examining it, he declared it a matter of little moment, observing only that he had lost too much blood; he dressed it carefully, and administered a cordial to Wat, who soon sunk into a sound sleep. His mother declared her intention of sitting by him during the night, although the trooper

her there was not the slightest necessity; and Wat had dropped gently into a soft slumber, Walter Manny and Michael returned to Ulfred

lated to the proceedings of the night—Michael asked, "Did they catch the devils who ran into the wood, do you know?"

Drawn by H. W. Thwaites.] [Engraved by J. Wall.

nd Rupert. Michael sat down to enjoy a hearty meal, which was spread for all upon the table. Among the topics discussed—and they all re-

"The two fellows of my troop returned unsuccessful," replied Sir Walter; "but Leowulf has been back with the villagers who accompanied him, and

he brought two of the runaways with him; however, the principal rascal is still away—"

"What! was Grif of the Bloody Hand one of those who ran off?"

"Ay! but our mysterious friend, the Snake, is at his heels, and remains in the wood on the prowl for him."

"Then he will not escape, and it would be a pity if he did."

Michael soon discussed his supper, and then bade them good night. They retired to couches prepared for them, and he to keep his promise with Flora; he did keep it—he remained an hour, and, as he came away, kissed her. It is most reasonable therefore to suppose she thought better of it, and did not keep her word.

CHAPTER XV.

"And from his native land resolved to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea."
Childe Harold.—BYRON.

"O! lost service! O! pain ill-rewarded!
O! pitiful heart! with pain enlarged!
O! faithful mind! too suddenly assented!
Return, alas! sithens thou art not regarded.
* * * * *
Lo! cruelty and disdain
Have set at nought a faithful true intent."
SIR THOMAS WYATT.

THE next morning, one of remarkable beauty, the villagers who were unhurt or slightly wounded, were stirring with the lark, to rid the village of the unsightly heap of bodies lying by the Cross. They dug a deep hole, and then carried the dead—not forgetting the eight who were slain at the clump of trees near to Halbert's residence—to it. They cast them in, and when the last one was thrown there, they filled it up, making a deep mound over it, in which they planted an upright beam, with a transverse piece near the top for an inscription, which it was agreed Halbert Evesham should supply. When this was done, and the broken weapons and all vestiges of the deadly conflict were removed, they visited those who were wounded, and ultimately their prisoners. They saw that the wounded were well attended, the unscathed well provisioned, and unanimously agreed that they never saw a set of human beings collected together possessing such qualifications and requisites to become successful candidates for the gallows-tree, as the rascals they were engaged in visiting. The troopers found their quarters remarkably pleasant; it was amazing how well they were supplied, and by such pretty faces and fair hands too, and how well they deported themselves—at least the sweet lips belonging to the pretty faces did not tell a tale, or make a complaint otherwise; and when Sir Walter Manny came among them, they expressed themselves obliged to him for the agreeable change he had made in their position. Their work the preceding night had been light and easy, and their situation in the morning little short of being delicious, and they concluded by honestly but humbly confessing they had no desire at present to quit. Sir Walter smiled, saying he was glad they were so well satisfied, and recommending them, in the gratified contemplation of their comforts, not to let their vigilance slumber, quitted them, and then repaired to the chamber in which Wat Tyler was lying. He reached it, and opened the door gently. He saw Wat's mother seated by the bed-side, with her hands clasped, resting lightly upon her knees, while her fond eyes were turned affectionately and watchingly upon her sleeping son. The noise of Sir Walter's entry made her start and change her position; but in a moment she recovered herself, and beckoned to him to approach. He obeyed the token, and said, whisperingly—

"I perceive your son still sleeps—how has he passed the night?"

"I scarce know, Sir Walter, how to answer your question," she replied. "I can but say that he has not awaked, but he has dreamed much. I believe he acted over again in his sleep the part he last night played; for at one time he was very restless, rolling uneasy to and fro, and muttering with a fixed brow some words which I could not distinctly gather; but the dream passed away, and he became placid, but it was speedily replaced by another. He smiled, and I heard him utter the name of one who is very dear to him—one who was brought up with him—"

"Violet Evesham," suggested Sir Walter.

"The same, sir; he breathed her name, and even while he did it a change came over his features; he pressed his hands quiveringly together, and his whole frame seemed convulsed; then tears, sir, forced their way from his eyelids and rolled down his cheeks. He seemed almost hysterical. His lips worked and trembled, and he muttered some words, but so low, I could not catch them; but I bent my ear close to him and heard him distinctly say, 'Farewell for ever!' and then, again, the strong shudder run through him. I wiped the tears from his cheek, and the hot moisture from his brow, and kissed his forehead. It was strange, sir, to witness the rapid change which passed over his face: he smiled, as I have only seen him smile when under some feeling of strong delight, and then he turned his face to the wall, and since that has slept profoundly, but well, calmly, and refreshingly. I would not have troubled you with this tale, but a sudden and painful thought has crossed me, and much oppressed my feelings. I have heard him speak high and warmly in your praise; and, if my foreboding be true, I must beg your aid to set it aside."

"In any way I can serve you, command me," ejaculated Sir Walter.

"I thank you fervently. I fear, then, sir, my son intends quitting me."

"Quitting you?—what, leave Brenchley entirely?"

"Even so, sir. I imagine something has transpired between him and Violet. I know he loves her very ardently, but should treat it as the heated imagination of a boy enthusiast; but Wat is not to be so judged."

"He is not, indeed," exclaimed Sir Walter.

"He has the wisdom, the judgment, the thought, aye, and the frame of a man grafted on the years of a boy. He lacks nothing which is to be found in one ten years his senior, and there is none who know him will attempt to deny it. It is the knowledge of this which makes me regard the love affair in a serious light; and, from what I heard him utter in his sleep, and remembering that yesterday he was sad and thoughtful, instead of showing the light merry-heartedness he usually displays, and said a short time hence might decide the inclining of his fate—that he might be a wanderer on the face of the earth, and begged my blessing more earnestly than I have known him to do; and when I gave it I saw water trembling in his eyelids as he hurried away;—all these little things, of which I scarce at the time took note, recur to me now with the greatest force; and, sir, I should

take it a most especial favour of you if you will draw from him if such is his intention, and, if he should acknowledge it to be so, implore him to alter it, and tell him I shall break my heart if he leaves me, which I shall—I shall indeed!" As she concluded she wept, literally sobbing out the last words.

"I will use my best endeavours to make him change his mind; but I fear, my dear lady, that if he has made the resolve, I shall have little success, for he is not to be persuaded after he has come to a conclusion which he is satisfied is correct, and for the best."

"I know that too well. From a child he ever had that extraordinary decision and firmness. We could guide, but never lead him; and this makes me fear so strongly his entertaining a notion of mixing in the world. There is no occasion for him to do so, and that he knows. He has always spoken as if he would wish to live and die here; and therefore I think that some quarrel has taken place between him and Violet, though I can scarce reconcile it to my mind, for she is so amiable, so good; but still there may be something of the sort. If there should be, you will perhaps add to the obligation by effecting a reconciliation. Ah! Wat is awaking. I will leave you presently together; and then, if he is well enough, break the purport of this conversation to him, and try your utmost to prevail upon him to stay."

"But—" exclaimed Sir Walter, intending to decline the task of effecting a reconciliation between Violet and Wat, if an estrangement had taken place, as it would put him in rather an awkward predicament; but Wat's mother raised her finger silencingly, and addressed a kind inquiry to her son.

"I feel well, dear mother," he replied, "save a slight weakness in my limbs; but a walk in the fresh air will soon restore me."

"Not yet, Wat—not yet," said his mother. "You have not strength to bear the fatigue."

"You are mistaken, mother, you shall see. Ah! Sir Walter Manny here."

"Yes, as I suspected, you fainted from loss of blood last night, and I have just looked into your room to inquire after your health," answered Sir Walter.

"You are very kind. My sound sleep has almost cured me. A day or so will fully restore my strength."

"I have some things to attend to below," said his mother, casting a significant glance at Sir Walter; "and while I am away, Sir Walter Manny will be gracious enough to stay and talk with you," and on the instant she quitted the room.

"My mother has some meaning in acting thus: I know her to a turn," exclaimed Wat, with a smile. "She has commissioned you to say something—perhaps lecture me for my hot-headed rashness in mixing in such dangerous pastime as we played last night. Pray, tell me what she has said; it will relieve you of a task which is to no one, at any time, agreeable."

"Ha! ha! you are right. She has desired me to say something to you, and i'faith I scarcely know in what manner to set about it."

"Give me an idea of its nature, and I will assist you."

"By my honour! but that is a fair but a droll offer. Well, it appears your mother has taken some strange, and I have no doubt unfounded notion, that you intend quitting her and Brenchley shortly."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and she takes it much to heart. Therefore you must tell her, the first opportunity, that she has not the least cause to entertain any such notion."

"You would not have me tell her an untruth?"

"It is true, then, as she has surmised?"

"It is. I have made up my mind, and I think unchangingly."

"You will do well to consider coolly upon the step you are about to take. You have every comfort here; have no need, as your mother informs me, to seek your fortune; and she is so attached to you—her happiness so involved in your presence—that if you leave, it will break her heart."

"My dear, dear mother! she has then taken the hint I gave her. I am glad of it—it will break the matter to her," muttered Wat; and then spoke loudly,—"You cannot make me alter my intention, Sir Walter—I am determined. I appreciate your kindness, but spare yourself the trouble, for it will be of no avail. I am resolved, and have good motive for what I do. I well know that my mother will suffer much by my absence at first, but time will assuage the anguish which the freshness of the change makes bitter. Let us change the subject; for, pursue it so long as you may, you will not change me."

"A moment's patience. I do not wish to persist in persuading, where I can see persuasion is of no avail; but, as your mother will view your departure as the direst calamity which fate can inflict upon her, I will at least say, for her sake, do not be too rash in coming to a conclusion which appears a little unreasonable, and which the alteration in one case may induce you to forego."

"An alteration in what case?"

"I feel that I am on very tender ground, Wat—and, marry, I hardly know how to go on; but I promised your mother I would do my best, and I will. Believe me, personally, I have no desire to touch upon a subject which to me is particularly delicate—to even hint at it—but it is your mother's wish, and remember I speak from her, not from myself."

"I guess to what you would allude," said Wat, thoughtfully; "you would speak of Violet. Fear not; I am prepared for all, and would hear all."

"She is aware that you love her—that you love each other—and attributes your sudden desire to part from home to some misunderstanding between you and Violet," said Sir Walter, rather quickly, as if he could not breathe freely until he got rid of that part.

"My mother is mistaken in one point, but not in the rest. There has been a misunderstanding, though not as she suspects. The misunderstanding has been on my side, but it is now cleared up, and to that certainly is my departure owing."

"May I ask what you would infer?"

"Matter which should particularly interest you, or I am deceived."

"Interest me?"

"Aye! Pardon me, Sir Walter; but, when you met Violet, you knew not that I was strongly attached—nay, devotedly loved her."

"I never heard of you until the stranger mentioned you to me, just before he besought me to rescue Violet; at the same time, he told me you loved her."

"That's strange. How did he know that?"

"He guessed, and rightly, from the energy you displayed in her cause."

"It is enough. When you first saw Violet, did you not fall in love with her? And each time you saw her afterwards was not that love strengthened? I ask the question because I guess it is so; for I, too, judge by your energy, when aught relating to her is before you."

"It is a strange question, coming from you."

"Look you, Sir Walter, it is necessary there should be a right understanding on all sides, and let there

be. I will premise that my heart's blood is not so dear to me, so loved, as Violet. I have seen by your looks, have judged by your words, uttered so warmly. I have not forgotten that, when introduced to me, you said that, 'stead of granting friendship to me, some men would in your situation—I marked that—have felt more inclined to regard me with hatred. I understood your meaning, albeit I professed ignorance; have observed, too, a thousand little things which the quick, jealous eye of a lover notes, when another looks with love upon her he adores—all of which tell me strongly that you love her. Is it not so? I ask thee in all calmness, with no sinister motive, I pledge my honour. Pray, answer me truly, is it not so?"

"I'faith, I have no alternative but silence, and that I care not now to keep; for 'tis only on thy account I would observe it. Since thou hast guessed as much, and dost so strongly wish to know, I answer thee that it is so. I do love her as she should be loved—that is, if I am capable of the feeling; and let me ask you, why you have sought this acknowledgment of me?"

"I am glad I was right—very glad."

Poor Wat, he did not look so!

"Why art thou glad?" asked Sir Walter, observing Wat suddenly fall into a fit of musing. His question roused him at once, and he replied—

"I have had an explanation with Violet; she loves me, but as a brother. Nay, nay, hear me out. I have good reason to believe thou hast won her heart; but from old recollections, and fearing I might feel deeply pained if she were to confess as much and bestow her hand upon thee, she will not acknowledge it. Were I to ask, I doubt not but she would unite herself with me, sacrificing her own for my happiness; but as to me the first desire of my soul is to see her happy, I will do my best to make her so; and believing that ye are more suited to each other in birth—for she is not what she seems—that you love each other—I am sure I can put faith in thee, and her happiness will be secured in wedding the chosen of her heart—so will I not stand in the way of preventing it, but do my best to bring it to bear, resigning to thee my dearest object of life. I confess it does require a hard struggle to compass it, for love is a point upon which the strongest are weak; and as I fear I could not look with a bright or cheerful countenance—though the act be mine—on the bestowal of her hand and heart to other but myself, I have come to the conclusion that it will be better to withdraw, than be a cloud, however slight, to dim the lustre of her happiness."

"Now, the grace of heaven instruct me! I know not what to say, or how to tell thee the strong impression thy abandonment of that which thou dost most desire—because thou mayst insure the absence even of regret to the object of thy love—has made upon me. I feel to the inmost recess of my heart thy generous resolve; it has taught me a lesson I will not fail to profit by; for that which shines in you—and would in all who stood in thy situation and acted thus—will not sit ungainly or ungracefully upon me. So will I, who have been brought up gently, whilst thou hast not been so fortunate, not suffer myself to be surpassed in this act of generosity, no less than justice. I do acknowledge I love Violet Evesham as truly as man may love woman—would peril life and limb in her service—would make her most gladly the bearer of my name, the sharer of my fortune, the partner of all the happiness it may please Providence to bless me with; all this would I do—more, if possible. And in saying thus much, you will understand that the possession of her heart I most covet—that if it be turned away, and I may have no hope that it will ever lean affectionately towards me, 'twill make me feel deep regret and pain. So will you believe me when I say, having apparently the gentle maiden within my grasp, that thy noble example has made me forego my earnest desire and selfishness, and confess that I have not a doubt thou'rt entirely mistaken in thy conjecture—that Violet loves thee even as thou canst wish, and looks upon me in the light of a friend, or brother."

"No, no! I wish it were so," said Wat, shaking his head despairingly.

"If it be as you say, then have I lived among women, and noticed with the quickest eyes their acts, their words, and the impulses and influences which govern them, for nothing," exclaimed Sir Walter, with a smile. "If Violet imagines she loves you as a brother, she is herself mistaken; put it to the test, and you will see that I am right. Marry, I confess to no great desire to convince you, for I should be gratified right marvellously if she loved me."

"I have put it to the test, and have found it as I have said."

"How tested you it?"

"I asked her the question. A mind so pure as Violet's would shrink from uttering an untruth, even upon so delicate a subject;—she confessed she loved me, but as a brother, and wept; and then when, I believe, I evinced some emotion—for I felt at that moment as I have never felt before, or imagine I can again—she bade me forget her unkindness, and told me she would be all I could wish."

"And from this you judge she only loves you as a brother?" asked Sir Walter, with surprise. "Make you no allowance for the native timidity of female nature, which prevents at first a full acknowledgment of what they feel?"

"I made allowance for all. I know Violet to a turn—I can read her mind at a glance. I challenged her with loving you—I did it as kindly as I could, and she did not deny it; but would not acknowledge it, stating she had other cause for sadness, to the exhibition of which I attributed the conflict between her love for you, and the fear, through that, of paining me; and said as much, that if her mind was now estranged from me, it would, perhaps, return again, and be more attached than ever: but this was said, I know, to soften the agony I endured, and I should hold myself as contemptible if I took advantage of it."

"We are still of diverse opinions; I esteem my case as hopeless as ever. Did I think, from what you have said, that Violet loved me, I would not be long in seeking an explanation; but I am more than ever convinced that she knows not the extent of her feelings towards you, and would have you certain that your surmises are correct before you endanger her peace of mind by quitting Brenchley."

"Upon that point I am fixed; and even be it as you persist it is, that she loves me, there is still a point from which I might expect opposition. Her family—"

"Ha! what of them?"

"There is a great mystery connected with her birth; I believe she is highly born, for she bears upon her the impress of gentle blood. I heard a slight history of her from the stranger of the snake, and I have strong suspicion that he was telling his own story as well; but that is for future consideration and discovery. However, the belief that Violet's love was only brotherly, has led me to reflect upon many things, which, until now, never crossed my mind, and everything tends to make me persist in my resolution of leaving England."

"Well, since such is the case, I will no further seek

to change your resolve; but permit me to inquire, when you quit the country, whither do you wend your steps?"

"To whatever port Edward, our King, requires an active soldier."

"Would Wat Tyler object to follow the fortunes of Sir Walter Manny?"

"On the contrary, there is not a banner he would more proudly fight beneath."

"I am glad to hear it; in less than a month, then, we shall be together on active service. I know that Edward is fitting with haste an expedition, and that, as soon as it can be completed, we sail. Are you prepared to depart so soon?"

"To morrow, were it necessary."

"Violet, during your absence, will be safe with her foster-father?"

"Trust me, that is not left unremembered; I have provided a plan for her safety and comfort: we will talk of that anon. I wish to see Violet this morning, for I am satisfied that the events of last night must have alarmed her, especially my stupid weakness: therefore I will attire myself, and you will, perhaps, accompany me to her dwelling?"

"With much pleasure, if you feel well enough."

"Oh quite; I am sick of lying here so long. I will join you below stairs a few minutes hence. If my mother should ask any questions respecting the commission she charged you with, tell her I will myself communicate to her the result of your persuasion."

Sir Walter Manny assented, and descended the stairs, where Ulfred and Rupert were awaiting his coming. Wat's mother, as he had anticipated, came to him, and showered questions upon him, but he managed to evade them, and had just made her acquainted with the reply Wat had desired him to give, when our hero made his appearance. He looked very pale as he entered the apartment, and his mother ran towards him, exclaiming against his having so soon quitted his bed; but he assured her of his resumption of strength, although he was so weak he found it difficult to stand unsupported, and avoiding her enquiring looks, he addressed himself to Ulfred and to Rupert with some common-place questions, not giving her the opportunity of asking the question which he could see hovered impatiently upon her lips. While speaking to Rupert, in answer to an inquiry respecting his combat in the wood with Grif of the Bloody Hand, the door-latch was raised, the door opened, and the head of Michael popped in, and his eyes glanced swiftly around; as soon as they alighted on Wat, the whole of his person became visible, and unmindful of any other person, he darted to him and seized him by the hand, professing great and real joy to see him apparently so slight a sufferer by his wound.

"I am going up to Evesham's," said he. "I promised Flora and Violet I would let them know how you were, but I suppose you are strong enough to go up yourself?"

"I was just going thither," returned Wat. "Sir Walter Manny was about to accompany me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Michael, not a very large amount of satisfaction displaying itself upon his countenance. He remembered what Flora had said of Sir Walter two nights previous, and the determination she had expressed of trying her very best the next time she saw him to captivate him; and if he had a choice, he would rather Sir Walter staid away.

"Was not one of these maidens the one whom you rescued from the ruffian of the wood, Sir Walter?" asked Rupert.

"Yes, she who bears the name of Violet," replied Wat, quickly.

"It is a sweet name," said Ulfred, "and an emblem of that sweet time, spring!"

"Ay! and no name could more fitly become her," exclaimed Sir Walter, with fervour; "for as the spring time, the herald of bright summer, is beautiful, because all things then are young, and fresh, and fair, so is Violet the emblem of the spring of life, for every beauty which can adorn a maiden is centred in her. She is all loveliness in mind and person—a violet in nature, no less than person."

Michael opened his eyes rather widely at this panegyric, which was uttered most warmly, and looking from Sir Walter, on whom he had fixed his eyes surprisedly at the tenor of his words, he turned them on Wat with a hard stare, to see what effect the speech made upon him, feeling that, had he been Wat, he should have been a trifle nervous about asking him to pay Violet a visit. Wat easily read Michael's thoughts in his looks, and smiled. He and Sir Walter perfectly understood each other.

"I should like to see a maiden thus beautiful," said Rupert, rather eagerly, to Sir Walter; "if my company would not be deemed an intrusion, I would beg to be of your party?"

"Wat Tyler can answer the question better than I," replied Sir Walter.

"If you please to attend us, you will meet with a welcome," said Wat; "and if you feel a pleasure in looking on pretty damsels, you will be much delighted, for Violet has a friend staying with her, who is remarkably pretty."

Wat looked, as he said this, at Michael, who bore himself uneasily at the allusion, and felt in no degree relieved when Sir Walter exclaimed—

"Ah! the pretty Flora? by my faith, a lively merry damsel! with a pair of eyes that sparkle and speak a thousand things in less time than I have used to say thus much of her. She spoke high in thy praise, friend Michael. I would not wish a friend to speak better of me when away than did she of thee."

"She does not always speak what she thinks," remarked Michael, scarcely knowing whether to laugh or look grave.

"In that case she does," exclaimed Wat. "It is to your face that she frequently says what she does not mean. The morning is waning fast—let us be gone."

"I suppose I am not to be left behind?" said Ulfred.

"Oh, no," uttered Michael, with a desperate effort at cheerfulness, though in anything but a state of resignation; "if one will be welcome, all will. The more the merrier." But he did not exactly think so.

They all departed, and soon reached the residence they were about to visit. Flora observed them coming, recognised Wat and Michael, and had the door open to receive them before they reached it. She had attired herself with more than usual care that morning. She had anticipated that at least Sir Walter Manny would come to ask after Violet's health, but she did not expect to see the addition of his two friends, both personable in the highest degree. Her heart was in a flutter—she laughed she scarce knew why—and her eyes sparkled more brilliantly than was their wont, bright as they were. Her cheeks were flushed, and she looked fascinatingly pretty. Michael would have felt it a personal obligation if she had contrived to have squinted; and, instead of the small, smiling, pulpy lips, been wrymouthed for that particular morning; but, out and alas! he thought he never saw her look so pretty,

or with such an obstinate determination to make full use of her laughing eyes; he gave himself up to despair, but he ground his teeth; and, resolving not to show it, grinned with all his might, as though his tide of happiness was at the full.

"I am so glad to see you, Wat," said Flora, shaking his hand. "I have been thinking and dreaming all night of you, and there's that foolish Violet up stairs been sobbing and making up her mind that you would be buried with poor Eldred Larch, who was killed in that horrible battle last night. I told her it was all stuff to think so; that you were very well, and that it was only pretence—you were not half so bad; it was only to make her love you a little more, that was all."

"I am much obliged to you," interrupted Wat, with a smile.

"Oh, not at all. I did it to ease her mind, but she would not believe me, and said I don't know what—something about throwing away your life purposely for some ingratitude that she had shown you."

"Flora!" cried Wat loudly, with a start of surprise, almost offence.

"Mercy on me, Wat, how you made me jump!" she rattled on as she recoiled, certainly a little startled by his sudden exclamation. "It is true what I tell you. I did not ask her what she meant by her ingratitude; but I did my best to convince her that it was no more than you ought to do, and what I should expect every lover of mine to do at any and all times."

"And so I would, Flora; that you know," said Michael, earnestly.

"Indeed! but I did not allude to you; I spoke of a lover—one whom I loved. Do not be too ready, friend Michael, to speak untruths."

Michael bit his lips and looked abashed, but said nothing.

"If that is your doctrine, fair Flora," observed Sir Walter Manny, "it must be rather dangerous to be loved by you. If you expect your lovers to throw away their lives, you will have but few. I think I should not be among the number."

"I am sure you would not," she replied, quickly. "I have better taste."

Sir Walter laughed, and so did Michael. He was, then, not the only one she jeered; that thought was a source of vast consolation to him.

"May I ask what would qualify one to be your lover?" asked Rupert, thinking he might as well have a try to come out in love as well as war. Flora looked at him fixedly for a moment; he was handsome, and had a pair of roguish eyes. She burst into a laugh, and said—

"In the first place, he must be handsome, tall, courageous, noble in mind and bearing. He must doat on the ground I walk, think of me perpetually, and swear by me—that is, if I allow him—of which I am not quite satisfied. He must in all things do as I wish him, and never answer even if he thinks differently—must be prepared to live for me, fight for me, die for me, and never, never be jealous." Here she looked at Michael rather significantly; he was watching her intently, biting his thumb-nail as if he was bound to rid himself of it in the shortest possible space of time.

"You expect impossibilities," said Rupert, laughingly," "or else I might offer myself as a candidate."

"You—you!" uttered Flora, tossing back her curls, and looking decidedly not disapprovingly at him; "I would advise you not to attempt it. Your case would be hopeless. You would not do at all."

"*Oh, that's very* discouraging; can't you abate a little of your expectations? then I might stand some chance."

"Not a jot. I will confess that the possession of some qualification, which I have not named, may counterbalance one of my list; but it must be fully equal."

"Well, perhaps I have some good quality unknown to myself. Will you try me?"

"Try you? no: it is for you to try; but you had better not—you have no chance."

"I should think not," said Wat, "with a heart pre-occupied."

"I should hope not," uttered Michael, with a little groan.

"Should you, good friends?" cried Flora; "that's a question that none can answer but myself, for none but I know whether it is pre-occupied or not."

"I fancied I did, and I am much mistaken if I do not," said Wat.

"You are mistaken, Wat, clever as you are," returned Flora. "You cannot tell but I might have all at once bestowed it on this gallant cavalier," she concluded, pointing to Ulfred.

"I should be very sorry if you had," exclaimed Ulfred.

"Sorry!" ejaculated Flora.

"Aye; I am already engaged; but, fortunately, to one who expects rather less than you do."

"You engaged, Ulfred?" cried Rupert, quickly, "to whom? Agnes?"

"I reserve the answer to that question for some future period," answered Ulfred, slightly embarrassed.

"With all my heart, but I know as well as you," observed Rupert; "however, you will not interfere between me and Flora, so I care not; therefore, fair damsel, I will try and see if I cannot be your lover, or loved, notwithstanding all you expect."

"Very well," replied Flora, laughing, "at your own peril be it—I tell you honestly you stand no chance."

"Many a warrior has done that, and yet won his battle."

"You will have all your trouble for nothing; however, there's my hand to the compact;" and she offered it to Rupert, who instantly took it and raised it to his lips, while Michael, who had squeezed and twisted his cap into all sorts of shapes and compass, fastened it suddenly with a jerk upon his head, and walked out of the place into the air; he passed the window quickly, and in a moment was gone; every one noticed his sudden departure, and Flora said, with seeming surprise—

"Bless me! Was that Michael who went out?"

"Yes," answered Wat, coldly.

"He seemed offended, I thought," said Sir Walter Manny.

"He's a singular fellow," said Rupert, with a laugh.

"He may be singular," exclaimed Wat, quickly, turning sharply to Rupert, "but perhaps it is because he is honest, free-hearted, simple, without disguise or guile; one who carries his heart—and it is worth prizing—in his hand. He never says aught he means not, nor aught he will not stand by, let his opposer be a giant in height and strength. Those who saw what he did last night, will acknowledge that, for those he loved, he would shed his blood like water, and, were it needed, lay down his life, too happy to the fullest extent to do them service. I have seen this remembered in the hour of danger, and forgotten when it had passed."

Flora felt every word he uttered pierce her heart like daggers; she turned pale and red, but said not a syllable. At this moment Violet descended the stairs

and scarcely waiting to make a salutation to the knight and his friends, advanced hastily to Wat, saying, "I heard voices, and among them thine, Wat; I was sure it was thine, and I am right; thou'rt better, or thou wouldst not be here; and yet, glad as I am to see thee, I would rather have heard the good news, and have known thou wert on thy couch resting, to be surely and speedily restored to thy accustomed health. How pale thou art! Hast thou overtaxed thy strength to come hither?"

"No, indeed, Violet," returned Wat, pressing her hand; "the sudden faint which last night seized me, was owing as much to over-exertion as to loss of blood. I am well enough now, and in a day or so shall be restored to my usual strength. I would I could see thee as thou wert before thou underwent the alarm occasioned by being torn from us: then thy eye was bright, thy cheeks had roses in them, and thy face was dressed in smiles—but it looks not so now; there have been tears and sleeplessness here; you must not give way to such sad feelings, Violet; it pains those who love thee much, to witness it, and injures thy health."

"I could not sleep when you lie stretched upon thy couch, wounded—for aught I knew, on the verge of death," uttered Violet, in a tone so low as scarce to be heard by any but Wat; "you who, when I lay ill, watched night and day by me—taking no rest, scarcely food, until it pleased Heaven to restore me; I could not know thy danger and be indifferent—I could not, Wat, I could not."

"If Sir Walter Manny should be right after all!" thought Wat, with a sudden rush of blood to his heart, which was almost painful, and he pressed her hands fervently as the idea crossed him. For a moment he was unable to speak, but, by an exertion he cleared his throat, and said, "How proud I feel to hear thee say this, Violet, thou mayst measure by past things; still would I have thee show thy kind interest in me by other signs than tears or sighs. I do regret, most sincerely, that my weakness should last night have so overcome me as to make thee think a mere scratch was dangerous, and I am here this morning to show thee 'twas not worth remembering, save," he added, lowering his voice, "to remind me that my exertions were repaid in full by thy affectionate solicitude for me." Then, as if to prevent a reply, he said hastily, "Sir Walter Manny, who did thee such gallant service, and last night secured to us the victory, waits to greet thee;" and he led her to the knight, who, taking her extended hand, raised it and pressed it to his lips with an air of devotion rather beyond the usual courtesy of salutation. Perhaps Wat's words that morning in his chamber had some slight effect upon him. Violet withdrew her hand gently, and dropped her eyes as Sir Walter looked earnestly into them, replying to his interrogatory respecting her health, with low, kind words, but with a reserved manner, yet not so marked as to be noticed by any but Wat and Sir Walter. The latter felt in an instant the change; she had in all their previous meetings been free and unconstrained, speaking as she thought; never, as he recollected, regarding him with looks or words as if she had given her heart to him, but always as if he was an old, tried, esteemed friend, whom she could trust and treat as a brother: but now there was a reserve in words and acts—slight, exceedingly slight, it was true—but it was a change, as though she cared little more for him than Rupert or Ulfred, whom she had never before beheld. After understanding from Wat that there was good reason to believe Violet's heart was well affected towards him—which if he had denied, still he could not help leaning to the flattering surmise, one which he so much wished realized—he felt more strongly the want of the sweet unreserve she had hitherto shown him; and had it not been that it was so very slight as to be unnoticed by others, he had strong inclinings to ask if he had in anything offended her. Had her reserve been more marked, he would have been less affected, because he could then have believed it was done to hide her affection, with a kind intent to spare Wat's feelings; but her manner was such as to check all hopes he had formed most effectually, to inwardly convince him Wat was entirely mistaken in his conjecture, and to at once attribute the conduct which had led Wat to believe her heart was another's arose from some latent cause, only distantly connected with their attachment. His features underwent a change, scarcely perceptible, as these thoughts thronged through his brain; but he rallied in a moment, and wearing his usual light chivalric air, he addressed her again, in a tone which indicated nothing to make any one believe he had felt she had not displayed her usual unaffected frankness towards him—

"Permit me," he said, "to present two friends of mine to you, fair Violet—Ulfred, nephew, and Rupert, son, to the gallant and good Earl of Tonbridge."

"The Earl of Tonbridge!" ejaculated Flora, surprisedly.

"And why not?" asked Rupert quickly.

"Had I know whom I addressed, I should have scarce used the freedom I displayed," was her answer.

"Indeed!" said Rupert, with a laugh; "perhaps you think as I once thought, that an Earl's son did a vassal's daughter honour by noticing her? But I have changed my opinion," he added, quickly, "and feel myself honoured when a maiden—such as thy sweet self—favours me by her notice."

"You have come to a right conclusion," replied Flora; "it is just what you ought to think; but you mistook my meaning. I never thought as it appears you have—oh no. I honestly confess I do not feel in the slightest degree honoured by your notice, because you are an Earl's son; the distinction makes no difference with me. No, I should have been more reserved, because I know that you lords of the land rate yourselves so high, that if any humble persons attempt to place themselves upon a level with you, you esteem it an insult as well as an infringement of your dignity."

"There is too much truth in what you say, my pretty Flora," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny. "Marry, I have seen such head upholdings—such high bearings and swaggerings—such imaginings of being formed of another sort of clay, that I have been tempted to become heartily sick of nobility of birth; and yet, perhaps, we should not wonder that these self-esteemed demi-gods carry their lordly heads so high, for, beshrew me, it is seldom there is anything in them to weigh them down; it is easy to elevate that which bears next to nothing."

"And yet you are nobly born, and nobly related," said Flora, laughing.

"Aye, but I trust I am an exception; and I can also name many most honourable exceptions, were it needful: but you will excuse me from presenting you with a list, and perhaps do me the favour to believe me without demonstration on my part."

"I can believe all you say, Sir Walter," she observed instantly, "unless you were to make love to me, and then I would not credit one word."

"Why not?"

"Because I know your affections are engaged," she replied, looking from him significantly at Violet. She did this to punish Wat for his speech on Michael, which

contained so severe an allusion to herself, but it did not affect him; Sir Walter coloured, but said quickly—

"You are right; aye, my sword, my bright unsullied sword, is my mistress; to her am I devoted—for her I live; and my last act, as I yield up my breath for ever, will be if my prayers are granted, to clasp her to my breast!" He turned immediately to Violet and said, "I am about to quit England upon active service—perhaps, if such is the will of Heaven, for ever; and as probably this may be the last time I see you before I leave, I will take my farewell of you. It is not usual for me to anticipate ill, therefore I will not say we shall never meet again; but it is not unlikely that years may elapse ere we again look on each other; and that I may remember the pleasant hours I have spent in thy company each time I array myself, may I beg that you will favour me with some small token, that I may have also the pleasing assurance I have never, since thou hast known me, given thee cause, willingly, to make thee drive me from thy memory?"

How earnestly Wat watched Violet's countenance, while Sir Walter Manny uttered this speech! He fancied her brow cleared until the request was made, and then she seemed perplexed and embarrassed. She, however, said in a quiet, but not indifferent tone—

"I know, Sir Walter, thou'rt wedded to a life where fame is the reward of constant hazard, of toil, and a great endurance. I know that thy duties make the certainty of thy life next to nothing; but if prayers for thy safety will avail—will shield thee from the deadly weapons of thine enemy, mine shall not be wanting; and in bidding thee farewell, I indulge in the hope that so long a period as you infer will not occur ere we again meet, or that when that time arrives, I shall see thee less in health, in honour, and happiness, than now. May He who is all powerful, all good, bless and preserve thee!"

She presented her hand to him; there was a dead silence, and all looked on earnestly. Sir Walter took it in both his, bowed low over it as he kissed it, and when he raised his head, Wat saw a tear had gathered in his eyelid.

"But the token?" said Sir Walter, in a voice which he was compelled to clear ere it could be heard.

"I have nothing worthy Sir Walter Manny's acceptance," she replied, evasively.

"A ribbon—a scarf—anything which was once thine, is all I ask. I will wear it upon my breast, nor part with it while I have life."

"It is a distinction too great for one so humble as I, a village maiden; there are many dames who boast high lineage and fair persons, from whom Sir Walter Manny might receive that which he asks of me, and the gift be more fitting, and he prouder to wear it."

"You do me wrong, Violet," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny, somewhat proudly. "I ask not that which I desire not. I would wear thy token with more joy and honour, than if I had received it from the highest dame England boasts. But I see you will not grant my request," he added, in tones of considerable disappointment; "I regret it deeply, and can only suppose I have, in some unconscious manner, offended one who has ever shown a sweet desire to bestow happiness on all around her."

"Indeed, indeed, Sir Walter, you have not," said Violet, quickly.

"Violet does not forget that Sir Walter Manny rescued her from the hands of villains; that he last night saved this village, and she, the most prized inhabitant in it, from violence and wrong," said Wat, who felt surprise at the reluctance Violet exhibited to bestow the token.

"Stay, Wat," cried Sir Walter, interrupting him; "I take no merit for doing that which I would have performed for a stranger—for deeds of which you were deservedly, if there is any merit attributable, the largest sharer. It is not for what I have done I ask the token, but that I may wear the colours—the token of one I will hold peerless against all the world. Sweet Violet, I can, in some degree, imagine why you withhold the boon—but fear not. I have said before, my sword is my mistress; to her am I devoted, and I ask your colours as the symbol of your sex, for whose honour I will peril at all times life and limb, and seek for naught beyond thy gift, but will bear thee in my memory as a saint—as tutelary angel, whose kind smile is ever in my eyes. You will not now, Violet, I pray, refuse me?"

Violet did not trust herself to say a word, but unfastened from around her waist a small pale blue scarf fastened around her cote-hardie as a sash, the long ends hanging down in front, and then timidly placed it in Sir Walter's hands. He received it, and his rich voice trembled as he said—

"Bless thee, Violet, bless thee!"

He then drew his sword from its scabbard, and fixing the point in the floor, he knelt down before the cross hilt and clasped his hands with the scarf in them, in an attitude of prayer, and said fervently—

"If ever I do aught to stain the pure honour with which this emblem of unsullied female purity should be borne, may my strength and courage desert me when most I need them—may all my doings be scorned as unknightly—may shame and disgrace attend me; but here I swear to bear, and determine to support it with all the honour which a true knight can show for that he regards as most dear to his soul; in strait, in danger, in temptation, and peril, I will wear it unsullied, so prosper me Heaven!" As he concluded, he sprung to his feet, and muttered, "Strong men are sometimes as weak as children;" he waved his hand, and left the house. Rupert would have followed him, but Ulfred withheld him and said—

"He will be back anon; do not disturb him by intruding on him now."

There was a silence of a minute, which was embarrassing to all, but it was broken by Flora, who with some tact essayed to remove it; she turned to Rupert, and said smilingly—

"You are a novice in love-making; you had a fine opportunity of following a good example, and requesting a favour of me. You have lost it, for it is too late to ask me now; I could not think of granting the request, after reminding you of it."

"I confess my dulness; but the next opportunity shall not pass unseized," said Rupert.

"Oh, how much you have to learn!" laughed Flora.

"Where is Michael?" asked Violet, noticing the flirtation between Flora and Rupert, and deeming it somewhat improper; "he promised to come this morning, and report everything concerning you, Wat."

"He has been here," said Wat, looking reproachfully at Flora.

"Oh, yes," cried Flora, with a disdainful toss of the head, determining not to show the annoyance she really felt; "and he has marched off in one of his stupid whims."

"It is a pity he should have had cause," exclaimed Wat.

"Indeed! I see no cause that he had to make himself the fool he did: besides, it is nothing to me what he does," she answered, with an air of indifference.

"I think, when last night he came with me, most

cheerfully, his whole heart in his purpose," said Wat, "to stand before this threshold, when we deemed it attacked, and were it required, lay down his life, if he had been slain, that you would have thought what he did something to you."

Flora turned pale, but would not by manner show that she was touched in the least. She bit her lip, and for the moment hated Wat with all her heart; she could not brook dictation, especially before any one whose good opinion she was desirous of obtaining; and though she felt keenly all that Wat said, and to herself acknowledged that she had unwarrantably

trifled with Michael's feelings, she would not have confessed as much to others for worlds; her pride was touched, she fancied her independence compromised, if she suffered herself to acknowledge, tacitly even, that Wat spoke truth, and she resolved to flirt worse than ever with Rupert, even if the consequences broke her heart, to show that her spirit was not easily subdued, or would suffer being dictated to. At this critical juncture Michael entered; he could not master his feelings when before in the cottage, seeing her so lightly forget his devotion to her, and before him accept a stranger to try and gain her heart, as though she was completely disengaged, and had never given him encouragement—had not, the very night previous, confessed that she loved him who had ventured everything in her service. He was deeply stung at her conduct—it at once impelled him to quit her for ever; but when away, he reasoned with himself strongly, believed her conduct occasioned only by an overflow of spirits—which in truth it was—and determined to rid himself of his jealousy, and believe there was nothing in it but a girlish desire to tease and plague him; he therefore returned, resolved to bear her humour cheerfully, and pass it off laughingly. Poor fellow! he little knew the self-command required to accomplish it. When he entered, Flora started, and was not a little pleased to see him back again, for now she would show Wat that she cared nothing for what he said, that she would not be talked to, and would do as she pleased. The first thing she did was to turn her back to Michael, and commence laughing with Rupert, while Violet, advancing to him, welcomed him warmly, with the kind intent that he should not notice Flora's flirtation; but Flora had no intention that he should miss it, for very shortly she drew his attention by inquiring if he had enjoyed his walk, if he felt better, whether he had kicked any unfortunate dog out of his path, and how much of his cap he yet had left. Michael replied in such a manner as to surprise her; he gave her ready and good answers. The banter was carried on for some little time without much loss of ground to Michael, and Wat began with Violet and Ulfred to enter into an interesting colloquy. As soon as Flora had an opportunity, she took no notice of Michael, suffered him three or four times to speak before she affected to hear him, then answered him in monosyllables, turning instantly to Rupert, allowing him her hand, and once or twice to pass his arm round her waist, and bending her ear to his whispers, laughing at whatever he said, when she was sure it was not overheard by Michael. Once, after standing a little while with Rupert's arm round her waist, she turned to see the effect on Michael, but he was gone; she was so surprised that, on the impulse, she cried—

"Why, where's Michael?" and could have bit her tongue off for saying it the next instant.

The exclamation caused the rest to pause in their conversation, Michael having been so engaged with Flora in conversation, and the young lady herself keeping up such a rattle with Rupert, that both Wat and Violet still believed he was talking with her, until she discovered his absence. They all looked round, but there was no trace of him left. Flora burst into a laugh and said—

"He's off again; when the tantrum is over, he will be back again."

Rupert was the only one who joined in the laugh with her; the rest looked rather grave, and Wat said to Violet—

"Excuse me for a time, Violet; I will soon be back. I must after Michael; he has strong feelings—he may do something foolish."

"If you fear so, for Heaven's sake lose not a moment," cried Violet; and he hurried at once to the door, upon the threshold of which he was met by Sir Walter Manny, who stopped him, saying quickly—

"I have come to bid ye instant farewell; but I shall, I imagine, be enabled to pay you another visit. By an especial despatch I am summoned to London, and thou likewise, Ulfred. I scarce believe my departure from England will immediately follow my arrival there; but if it should, suffer me now, sweet Violet, to bid ye farewell, until fortune permits us again to meet. May heaven guard thee as its choicest treasure on earth! and rain blessings on thee! Farewell!" He kissed her hand fervently; then turned to Wat, saying, "I shall shortly see you again; my orders are instantaneous. Come, Ulfred and Rupert, to horse—to horse! Farewell all!"

"Did you encounter Michael as you returned hither?" inquired Wat, as Sir Walter, waving his hand, was about to quit the house.

"I did," he replied, stopping short. "Beshrew my thoughtlessness not to have mentioned as much; he reached me just as the courier, whom I had met in search of me, had delivered his despatch. Somewhat to my surprise, as soon as he learned its purport, he begged, in terms the most earnest, not to be denied to join my troop; he was so warm in his entreaty I could not refuse him: and then he bade me bear to thee and Violet a kind farewell, at the same time requesting of thee, for his sake, to see his mother, break his departure to her, and do all you deemed necessary to console her, if she felt grieved at his abrupt quittal."

"Where is he now?" eagerly asked Wat.

"He joined the courier whom I despatched to my fellows, ordering each to strap a prisoner behind them, and lose not a moment in departing for London. He is with them on their journey by this time."

"Can he not be overtaken?" exclaimed Wat, earnestly.

"I should think not. They stop not until they reach London, or near it and they will do little less than gallop the whole way. I must imitate them. Farewell! God bless you all!" He again waved his hand, and in a moment was gone. Ulfred, accompanied by Rupert, took a hasty leave and followed him. As they disappeared, both Violet and Wat were startled by a sound as of something which fell heavily; they turned like lightning, and beheld Flora stretched senseless upon the ground.

She had fainted dead away!

CHAPTER XVI.

"In some dark recess the senseless brute
Sits sadly pining: deep melancholy,
And black despair, upon his clouded brow
Hang lowering; from his half opening jaws
The clammy venom and infectious froth
Distilling fall; and from his lungs inflam'd,
Malignant vapours taint the ambient air,
Breathing perdition; his dim eyes are glar'd,
He droops his pensive head, his trembling limbs
No more support his weight. Abject he lies,
Dumb, spiritless, benumb'd."

SOMERVILLE.

"Through woods, bogs, roads, and streams,
Has measured half the forest; but alas!
He flies in vain.
* * * * *
Again he flies, and with redoubled speed
Skims o'er the lawn.
* * * * *
No pause allowed,
Breathless and faint he faulters in his pace,
And lifts his weary limbs with pain that scarce
Sustain their load! He pants, he sobs, appall'd.

IBID.

"As two boars whom love to battle draws,
With rising bristles and with frothy jaws,
Their adverse breasts with tusks oblique they wound.
With grunts and groans the forest rings around,—
So fought the knights."

DRYDEN.

WHEN Sir Walter Manny appeared in sight with his troopers to aid the villagers of Brenchley, Grif of the Bloody Hand knew that all chance of success for him and his men had fled, and the most advisable, and indeed only course for safety was to gain the wood; but as we have seen, this *dernier ressort* was defeated by Sir Walter, and then Grif grew dispirited, and ultimately frightened. The terrible exigency of his situation, instead of making him desperate, as it would most men, had the effect of rendering him miserably terrified, abjectly cowardly; he was one of the first to endeavour to put his command to fly to the wood into execution, but was stopped by a trooper, and at the first blow dealt him, fell as if killed, although unwounded by his antagonist. He lay quite still until the fight had ceased, and then seeing the coast clear, he suddenly started up and made for the wood. There were two or three who had employed the same feint, and almost simultaneously followed his example, although it was unconcerted.

They had hoped to get away unnoticed, or at least unpursued, but they were mistaken; they were hotly followed by the stranger, Leowulf, Mark Grayling, and others. They were all captured and carried back, save the most desired, Grif of the Bloody Hand. He was the first to start, had gained some distance before his comrades had followed him, and was the first, by a considerable space, to enter the wood. He dashed among the trees, at the top of his speed, in his anxiety not considering where. The cry—a death cry—of his pursuers was ringing in his ears, and terror lent swiftness to his feet. He flew through glades and coverts, doubling and winding, but still was the cry of pursuit ringing in the air, and always could he hear the pattering of footsteps in his rear.

In a state of maddened excitement he strove to increase his speed, leaping and bounding along, in an agony of fear; although tearing on at a swifter pace than he had ever gone, it seemed as though his feet were hung with leaden weights, and his breath all exhausted—he felt as if he could shriek, and that if he did, 'twould relieve him. He feared he could not keep on much longer—he panted dreadfully; he was growing sick—there was an ache in his side as if a knife had been thrust in it. He must drop—he was certain he must drop; but the dread, the horror of being caught by his pursuer, forbade him giving way.

Ever and anon the wild cry pierced his ears, and he heard the untiring footsteps following his own. Oh! what would he give, had he aught of enormous value to bestow, to know that they had ceased, and he might stop to rest! but no, on they kept; on, on, and even sounding nearer and nearer—he dared not look over his shoulder. He knew, instinctively, that the masked, snake-crested stranger was pursuing him, and he dreaded to have the feeling made certain, for he had an undefined horror of him. He gnashed his teeth—he was growing weaker.

Was there no place which would secrete him? He looked right and left, swearing most fearful oaths in his wild despair, for there appeared no spot in which he should have time to secrete himself before his pursuer reached him. At length he entered a copse, impervious to the moon's rays; he chuckled—almost roared with delight; he made a last effort of strength to increase his speed, and flew through the dark place. When some distance down it, his feet were caught by the straggling root of a huge tree, and he was thrown with tremendous violence, stunned, but not insensible. He arose, but could proceed no farther—he was sick and exhausted. The thought suddenly struck him of mounting the tree; there was no time for consideration—he grasped at the rugged trunk, found foot and hand hold, and was soon up among the branches and leaves. He gave a groan of relief—horror! it was echoed close to him; his hair bristled up, and his heart beat violently. Was this stranger pursuing him a spirit? One of those of whom Martin du Bois had spoken so positively? If he was, there was no hope of escaping—no hope; he was already at his side, and his hour was come. The fiends of hell forbid!—he held his breath, but the sound was not repeated, and he drew a long breath, fearful of hearing it echoed; but nothing responded, and he began to laugh at his fears, although the cold sweat still stood on his brow. A silence, unbroken by even the wind among the leaves, somewhat reassured him, and hopes came stealing over him that for the present, at least, he had escaped.

He could not, albeit, rid himself of a strong presentiment that he was watched—that there was an eye upon his hiding place, which would not be moved so long as he was there sheltered; but this was an evil by no means so great as the one from which he had just delivered himself. He might obtain means of eluding its vigilance—at all events, he was resting, and he might, while recovering his strength, devise some mode of extricating himself from his present situation, and still be enabled to wreak his vengeance on the inhabitants of Brenchley. He ground his teeth hard at the bare thought of such a thing being possible, and gloated upon the idea, pursuing it until in imagination he had subjected the villagers to many frightful, unheard of tortures.

Suddenly he heard the crackling of dry leaves, and a stealthy foot passed the tree amongst whose branches he was hidden. It stopped; he held his breath, kept every nerve from moving but his [illegible] every effort, it would beat no

consternation was tremendous, when he heard some one climbing the very tree which held him—a being whom he could not see, although he looked intently. He moved not, breathed not; and the new comer, enshrouded in darkness, he could hear arising step by step, until he would in a minute or less be on a level with himself; a cold tremor seized him, he knew not how to act, his heart beat more violently than ever, and he nearly uttered a cry of horror, for he saw suddenly the pale blue snake of flame, twirling and twisting about, although he could not see the wearer. With an exertion beyond description, he restrained himself, even though he had fresh motive for almost shrieking; a long, half-stifled moan arose as if it came from close by his side—not below him where he beheld the snake glaring, but level with him, within a foot of him; his heart died within him, his knees knocked together, large drops of cold clammy perspiration rolled from his brow; he gave himself up to despair; was about to utter the agony of horror he felt, when he heard the stranger of the snake utter—

"'Tis well; the morning will do for him; but for the other there must be no rest nor sleep until he is mine."

He then descended the tree, much to Grif's relief, although it gave him no trouble to guess that the stranger had alluded to him in his soliloquy. But of whom else did he speak? Was there any one already in the tree? Ha! there must be one who had uttered the groan. On the impulse he stretched out his hand; he drew it back shudderingly—he had put it upon a face. Every limb quivered with terror—there was another there! But why was he so horribly silent? Was he dead?—if so, he was not to be feared—yet there was something terrible in being in that intense darkness alone—side by side—with a dead man; but was he dead? He stretched out his hand again, and its back was penetrated by the point of a knife; he drew it hastily away, with an oath, and no small astonishment. Again he heard a low moan close to his ear, and once more he cautiously put out his hand to ascertain who was beside him, if it was to be accomplished by touch. This time he was more successful; he discovered that he who was so near him was bound to the tree and gagged, and then he speculated upon whom it could be; some enemy of the stranger's, doubtless, and therefore probably some friend of his; but in his situation, as that was a point upon which it was highly essential that he should be certain, he resolved to do nothing towards his release until daylight, or some token capable of no mistake, assured him that he had a friend at his elbow. Suddenly it struck him it might be Martin du Bois; he compared the circumstances which had already befallen Martin, his extraordinary absence at the time he was to have been with him, with the present situation of his companion, and he was almost satisfied that it must be him. He dared not ask the question, even in a whisper, for not having heard the stranger depart, he doubted not he was at the foot of the tree, and a breath might discover his situation, bringing a speedy and certain death.

Then again he had a doubt whether Martin and the eight men he had despatched to carry off Violet, had not succeeded, and quitted the neighbourhood. After conjecturing various things, he concluded that the best thing that he could do was to wait until daylight, and if it was Martin, to do the best he could to release and escape with him; and with that reflection he composed himself with such resignation as he could muster, to remain until morning and see what efforts he could make towards his deliverance.

He would have felt much more comfortable if he could have been certain that the stranger was a little way off, and not beneath the tree, for then he might have some chance of getting a little sleep; but as matters stood now, he could not tell, one minute from another, that this mysterious enemy might not again clamber up, perhaps discover, and stab him while he slept. An hour passed wearily away; although he had listened very intently, he had not heard the stranger move; no sound did he hear—the very little wind that had stirred the leaves slightly had died away. At times the stillness was terrible to him, and he wished earnestly that a mighty wind would arise and tear through the forest: in the noise of waving trees, cracking boughs, and whistling gusts, he might be enabled to get away unseen, unheard.

Then he would congratulate himself upon the silence; for so long as his retreat was undiscovered he was safe, and at the same time could tell whether his lurking enemy was still on the watch, or had departed to a sufficient distance to allow him to escape without being detected. When he had pursued that subject until he had exhausted it, he commenced a species of self-interrogation respecting the mysterious foe who so pertinaciously clung to him with such deadly determination—who had exhibited such terrible animosity, and was seemingly the chief instrument in accomplishing the destruction of his band. There was such a tremendous catalogue of crime to wade through in order to find one whom he had visited with some atrocity, and who had escaped with life, to this work out his downfal, that he found it, if not tedious, anything but agreeable; because, in reviewing his past deeds, he could not hide from himself, that although he had hitherto remained unpunished for his numerous villanies, a time would come when the tortures he had inflicted upon others would be visited ten-fold upon himself. He felt it a matter of duty, therefore, putting inclination out of the question, to keep himself alive as long as it was possible, for the

"Dread of something after death,"

most richly deserved, and fully expected, rendered life a thing of considerable importance to him. As some villany rather more atrocious than others crossed his memory, he shuddered, and wished he had not gone so far; wished there was no punishment hereafter for such evil doings; wished he had always been virtuous; wished, in fact, anything rather than be what or where he was; for although he was deep in his fit of musing, he never for an instant forgot the presence of his danger; that there was one waiting for him who would strive, to the utmost stretch of his powers, which were singularly great, to send him to the place he had such powerful reasons to avoid visiting; accompanying every thought was a glance for his eye, or an ear bent to catch the slighest sound which might tell him the watcher had departed; but in vain; he might occasionally hear a leaf rustle, but never the retiring footsteps of the stranger.

He asked himself many times why he should fear encountering him; why that extraordinary feeling of dread should hang upon him, paralysing his powers as well as his courage in all things where this mysterious being was concerned? and could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. Who was he? was a question he repeated to himself again and again, but without being able to answer, save that his thoughts constantly recurred to the member of his band whom he had shot in the wood, Mat Snake; and in remembering his name, he recollected many strange things

connected with his joining his band, of disasters which befel them immediately after, and during the time he was a member of it, and of the circumstance of his endeavouring to quit the band, which had been discovered by one of his companions, whom he had persuaded to join him, but who made use of the confidence reposed in him by disclosing his intention to Grif; to whom it occurred very forcibly that in firing the bolt at Snake, in the dim twilight, he had missed him; that he had escaped, and was thus wreaking his vengeance. Then, as before, he had an idea that it might be his spirit—he hoped most earnestly it was not, but he feared it might be, for he believed that none but some supernatural being could do what he had that night done; but if he was an avenging spirit, why did he not at once attack and destroy him? for being superhuman, he must have the power; but, perhaps, it was to make his death more terrible, to keep him there in a state of horrid suspense, as bad, nay, worse than death, and when his fears and feelings were stretched beyond the power of endurance, then to spring upon him, and to consign him at once to an awful, everlasting perdition.

He shivered with the bare idea, and doubted whether it was not the best plan to descend the tree, and court the doom waiting for him at once, instead of staying there dying by inches; for his thoughts and speculations were as so many daggers piercing him. Once, to such a pitch did he carry the idea, that he moved, resolved to put it into execution, but the sound again of a stealthy footfall made him pause, and hold his breath to listen if it were departing or receding; to his delight—for it was a sensation no less—he heard it dying away, as though, tired of watching, his foe was departing; soon it was lost in the distance, and he prepared to descend, but then determining to do nothing rashly, he changed his mind, and resolved to wait until the dawn of day should give him the opportunity of seeing his path clear, and, in the event of attack, be prepared to meet and do what he could to overcome his opposer.

He waited two or three hours, which were almost like years to him. Several times he thought it impossible to continue there, and would descend; then he altered his intent and remained. At times he fancied that the place was by nature so dark, that no light would penetrate it—and he might wait for days in anticipation of seeing the morning dawn, and then be disappointed. But at last he began to observe the darkness changing to a grey light—if the semi-darkness might be so distinguished—and then with a little more composure, but still much impatience, he waited for another hour, but found that the light increased only in a small degree, and that probably if he remained the whole day, it would be very little, if any lighter, and if he proposed quitting, now was as good a time as any. He was about to put his resolve into effect, when he recollected his neighbour, and determined to ascertain who and what he was. He addressed him in a low voice, but received no reply, and it was so dark he could scarcely discern the dim outline of a figure bound to the trunk of a tree, while his feet rested upon one of the arms; he repeated his words, but still without receiving a reply; he increased the tone of his voice, but in vain; the prisoner was silent. Grif then got nearer to him; and applying his mouth to his ear, asked him who he was; but was answered only by a moan. As he could not see that any harm would result to him by the captive's being set at liberty, he determined to unbind him; at least he would be an ally, and might be the means of his getting clear away. He had no sooner arrived at this conclusion than he at once proceeded to unfasten his bonds, detach the dagger, which served as a gag, which he transferred to his own girdle to serve him in case of need, and then his companion was at liberty. When assured of this, he again addressed him, but chafed with rage, after several endeavours to find himself unable to get an answer. He soon discovered that this arose from excessive weakness, approaching insensibility, and knew that he must, by some means, restore him to consciousness before he could gratify his curiosity. The next difficulty was how to accomplish it. He could not use any means to revive him up in the tree, and how was he to get him down? There was but one plan which presented itself to him, and that was to lay hold of the neck-piece of his cotehardie, and lower him down. He had little time to waste in devising schemes; and, no sooner did these means strike him, than he seized his neighbour by the neck-piece and proceeded to push him down, but encountered considerable opposition. The liberated stranger, though weak to fainting, and his arms powerless from being bound so long, was still so far conscious and tenacious of life as to object in act to what he believed a desire on the part of Grif to hurl him from the tree; but, although his will was good, he had no strength to resist, and Grif succeeded in carrying out his intention—depositing him upon the turf, not quite so gently as to be pleasant, but without hurting him. He quickly followed, and, observing a stream of light penetrating through an opening in the branches of a tree near, he dragged his companion in a line with it, until it alighted upon his face, and then he ejaculated,—

"I thought so—it is Martin du Bois! How did the fool contrive to get fastened up there? By the being who ascended the tree, I suppose. Why, what can this idiot have done to him that he should thus punish him? It is strange. Now, I should not wonder but I have the greatest trouble to make this fool understand where he is, and that he is with me. Ho! Martin—Martin du Bois! Look up, man—how cold he is!—look up! This is I—thy friend Grif! By the foul fiend! if thou wert thy father, and I were to mention my real name, thou wouldst rise up, even if in thy grave garments. Ho! Martin du Bois! I am thy friend. My curses light on the idiotic cur! he rolls his eyes about like one mad, but will not look on me. Martin du Bois!—pshaw! why not use his own name? that should make him come to his senses; for, if I am not mistaken, there is one bearing it not far from the scaffold. Ho! look up, John Maltravers—ho! John Maltravers, awake thee!"

As this name lighted on the ears of Martin, he started and looked hard at Grif, whose face, in the straggling ray of light, was only dimly shadowed forth; but, after a scrutiny of a minute, he seemed restored to consciousness, and in a voice low and husky said,—

"Is it Grif of the Bloody Hand?"

"It is Grif," growled he, with a frown; "but learn, Martin du Bois, I am not fond of nick-names. It will be well that thou dost not repeat the one which thou hast just uttered; it may be dangerous to thee. How comes it I find thee thus? Who bound thee to the tree, and why was it done?"

"Oh! I am faint and sick; let us leave this place of horrors. Would I had never entered it!"

"I would thou hadst. To thee may I attribute the utter destruction of my band, and the danger of myself. I was an ass to do thy bidding. I did not wish to quarrel with the villagers of Brenchley; but to do thy service I did; and the consequence is, I have not a man left, and doubt if I shall myself escape. The foul fiend seize thee and thy service! Hadst

thou not been a love-sick gull, thou hadst ne'er desired a wench who scorned thee, and I should not have been induced to do as I have done. When I think to what a pass it has brought me, I could find it in my heart to bury this skean in thy ribs, but that it cannot undo what is done, and thou mayst yet be of service to me; so thy life is still thine. Come, bestir thyself, and quit this copse. Hast strength to wield a weapon?"

"No, no!"

"Infernal death to thee, thou miserable rat! Thou hast neither strength nor courage! Why didst thou thrust thy goose's pate into dangers, if thou hadst not heart to meet them? What piece of foolery got thee string up in the tree?"

"Thy resolve to attack the village was the cause."

"How? Pshaw! how could that be? None knew it but you."

"Possibly. But I encountered a forest sprite—oh, horror! it must have been a sprite."

"Well, go on; no fooling; go on."

"It was he who stabbed thy follower sleeping by my side last night."

"Ha! Who was this? Describe him."

"He acknowledged it, and that he had slain the four you sent to carry away Violet; he bared his arm, and showed me a snake twisting about it, and then told me his intention of defeating your project of destroying the village, of which he knew, and obtained from me the hour you proposed doing it, and the one also it was arranged we should abstract the maiden."

"You told him this?" almost roared Grif.

"I had no power to refuse him."

"Execrable fool! Damned idiot! To this then may I assign the thwarting of my purpose; he apprised the villains of my coming, the, rose, and got assistance to oppose me—oppose! ruin me—and through thy cursed chattering tongue. What should hinder me burying my knife in thy heart, thou brainless fool?"

"Thou hast blood enough, Grif, thou hast no need of mine; and if I erred, I have been punished. At first I thought him a spirit—"

"Pshaw!"

"Aye, and had you met him you would have thought so too; but something he said of my father and you—"

"What?—knows he of our connection? Hell and death! Who can he be?"

"I know not. He called himself a spirit of vengeance, and afterwards denied it, saying he was one whom my father wronged years since in conjunction with you. As soon as I learned he was no spirit, I attacked him; but he with ease overcame me, and bound me as you, I suppose, found me."

"Wronged by your father in conjunction with me! Years since, he said?"

"He did."

"Why, who can he be? Said he no more?"

"Nothing as I remember, save that he had changed from a peaceful nature to a desire for a bloody revenge, which he would have on you and him, and he bore a charmed life until he had accomplished it."

"Years since—it is strange—it is not Mat Snake, that's clear. He can never be the husband of Editha? He might be; and if he is, he owes the revenge. But he cannot be: years have passed since then, 'tis true, but this cannot be him—still it may, and if it be, then I fear not to meet him; he is but a man, and there are but few can stand before me, save—Hell! That thought daunts me: since that village cub threw me, every one seems to have defeated me; but so shall not this lurker—let the thoughts of death nerve my arm, and make me desperate; it shall make me the conqueror too. My sword must be near here, where last night it flew from my grasp when the straggling roots of the tree threw me."

As Grif concluded his soliloquy, he groped among the grass and leaves for his weapon, and having found it, he rejoined Martin, and said,—

"Hast thou strength to walk?"

"I will try, but my legs feel like logs—so stiff and cramped, I can scarce move them, and every bone in my body feels as sore as if I had been beaten by a stout cudgel."

"Take heart and try; there, thou hast gained thy feet, now walk."

"It is very difficult. Let me lean on thee."

"I am not going thy way."

"My way! I will go any way which may please thee; to the cave, if it suits thee, where thy band rendezvous; then thou canst let one of thy followers attend me."

'Fool! did I not tell thee I had not a man left."

"Not a man; how mean you?"

"The devil grant me patience! through thy open mouth and babbling tongue, the villagers knew of my coming, got Sir Walter Manny with his troopers to aid them, have cut most of my men to pieces, and made the survivors prisoners."

"Confusion! then you are yourself a fugitive?"

"Ay! with this infernal troublesome fellow, who bound thee to yon tree, on the watch for me; but I will meet him, and cut him to shreds."

"Nay, let us escape together; do not meet him, he will be sure to slay thee; heaven lends him assistance. Try it not—let us fly together."

"What! be trammelled by a snivelling, frightened, crawling idiot like you? you, who have already lost me so much? Pshaw! if I were to be that fool, I should deserve the doom I should expect to meet. No, thy way and mine lie separate."

"I wish they always had."

"And I. I should not now be at hide-and-seek, where I was lord of all."

"I have scarce strength to crawl; I have no support if we go not together. Wilt thou lend me thy sword to lean on?"

"And leave myself weaponless? Go to, I'll cut thee a staff, and then away with thee."

He did as he promised, and gave Martin the staff, bidding him depart. He was acting shrewdly: he believed, if Martin quitted the copse, and the stranger, who was on the watch, saw him, he would, in all probability, be out after him; and while they were engaged in fight, he would take an opposite path, and by this stratagem escape. He, therefore, urged Martin to depart.

"It is your safest plan," he said; "while the day is yet so young, you're less likely to be seen, and you need a long start to distance pursuers. I will take a different path to thine, and if I get clear of the wood as well as thee, a long time shall not elapse ere I visit thy castle to claim my reward. I shall want money then, and you must be prepared to pay it."

"You have not fulfilled the conditions."

"I have done my best to do it, and lost all in the attempt. I should think that is enough to satisfy you."

"Indeed it is not. I have suffered as much in mind and person as you have in property and position, and I cannot think of doling out a large sum without any equivalent. Besides, you lost your men on your own service, not on mine."

"It was through thee. If thou hadst not have bribed me to carry off the girl, and I had had more

sense than to comply with your wish, I should not have been outraged by the serfs, should not have sought a revenge in attempting to destroy the village, and thus have been beggared of my band."

"But thou art not of the wealth of the band. Thou has still in plunder more than thy wants will require."

"Dost thou take me for an ass, equal to thyself? Dost thou think thy father would walk into the arms of Edward's troopers, who are on the hot search for him? Or dost thou think I would visit the cave, when doubtless there are a party stationed to greet me when I reach it?"

"Is thy haunt known?"

"Is it unknown, when an unseen hand stabs a sleeper at thy side? That same being who distinguishes himself by a snake, would not be long in leading a party there, or in directing them thither, if he led them not. No, I must get quit of the wood, or at least of the neighbourhood, with what speed I may, and then I shall to thee, and claim my dues."

"A tall gallows, and a short shrift."

"Look you, John Maltravers, thou wert ever a short-sighted fool. I have told thee thy blunders will lose thee some day thy life, and if I had not need of thee, that speech would have cost thee thy best blood—away with thee, tempt me no farther, I have much to do to keep my hands unstained from thee—away, and get the money ready by the time I shall appear for it."

"I will not pay thee three thousand merks for nothing."

"Thou wilt not?"

"I will not—I repeat it, I will not."

"Then, by the fiends of hell, I swear thou shalt not quit this glade with life." As he said this, he drew the long-bladed knife he had removed from Martin's mouth, and seized him by the throat: he had no power to resist.

"You shall have the money, were it twice the sum," he cried, energetically.

"Swear it," roared Grif, forgetting that he had no desire to let the stranger know his locality.

"I swear," muttered Martin, nearly strangled.

"Nay, repeat the oath I shall administer to you?"

"I will, I will!" cried Martin, with starting eyes.

Grif administered a fearful oath, which the terrified Martin took, and then Grif released him. "Now, dally here no longer," he continued, when Martin had finished, "had'st thou not been thy father's son, I would have slain thee long since. Away with thee, my sight sickens at thee; begone, use thy best speed, and caution, too, for if you are seen, you will not be suffered to escape lightly; look twice down a glade before you enter it, and crawl among the shadows of the trees as you pass through the coverts; take the nearest outlet you can find to Tonbridge, take horse there, and ride for your life."

"But I know not my way from here to Tonbridge."

"I cannot guide thee, for I know not in what part of the wood we stand; but keep the sun as he rises, before you, until you get in some glade you know, then use thy speed. Farewell!"

"Farewell," said Martin, moving slowly away, using his legs with pain and difficulty; his arms, too, being of little service from long confinement. After dragging himself a short distance, he stopped and looked round with an appealing look to Grif; but had it conveyed ten times its force of expression, it would have been lost in a two-fold way: for, in the first place, it was not Grif's nature to sympathise with any one in pain or misfortune—that feeling was only to be created in him by some one who excelled in acts of villany; and secondly, the place was so gloomy, although the sun was now above the horizon, that when he turned, Grif was invisible. He had no alternative; and with a deep sigh, anticipative of something terrible about to befall him, he crawled on. Grif, as soon as his weak companion had quitted, threw himself among a clustre of brushwood, heedless of the damp, slimy grass growing in profusion, and applied his ear to the ground. He cursed and blasphemed at the slow progress Martin made, for he could hear his lingering step, as it slowly beat the earth, now tardily moving—then stopping—and then crawling on again. It appeared as if he would be hours getting quit of the dismal copse, and Grif felt inclined to spring up, dash after him, and by force impel him forward at a swift pace; but the impolicy of indulging the impulse was too vividly present to be guilty of the indiscreet desire; so he gnashed his teeth, and chafed with raging impatience until the sound of the footsteps quite died away. They had grown gradually fainter and fainter until they were indistinct, and ultimately, by the utmost intensity of listening, no longer to be heard: but they had been unimpeded, unstayed.

There had been no hurried tread of feet—no rapid beating of footsteps, indicating a struggle—nothing which could realise the fond hope that Martin had been intercepted and attacked by the stranger; he was therefore in as great a dilemma as ever. How could he tell but Martin was suffered to depart, because, from his stiffened limbs, he might easily be overtaken; and he, Grif, watched anxiously for, that the moment he appeared, he might be sprung upon and sent to perdition at a single, unwardable blow?

How could he tell that Martin had not chosen the path unguarded, and if he followed an opposite one he might not be rushing blindly into the very danger he was desirous to avoid? He indulged in a variety of horrible execrations; and at last, finding they did not improve his position, he resolved to trust to fate, and move off in the reverse direction to that Martin had pursued; accordingly, grasping his sword with a slight additional tenacity, an unconscious act of nervous excitement, he departed from his hiding place, and stole swiftly among the entangled trees and shrubs of the darksome place, scratching and tearing himself as he found himself compelled to force his way among the thorny briars and brambles, between straggling and stunted trees, growing so thickly and closely, that at times he could hardly thrust himself between their trunks; he continued driving and plunging from thicket to thicket, sometimes stumbling upon an unseen hillock, and the next instant floundering in an unexpected stagnant pool; every step grew worse and worse—thickets and brushwood increased—trees started up in every path. Once, having detected the presence of a pool, by the sudden plunge of a disturbed toad, or other noxious reptile, into its thick and turbid water, it was too dark to see his path, he measured as well as he was able its extent with his sword, and then leaped, but calculated not on a protruding branch hanging so low as to catch him with terrible precision between the eyes—his leap making the contact so violent as to dash him back into the pool; he scrambled out, groaning with pain and fury, and advanced more cautiously than ever; but the path grew so complex, so entangled, such an inextricable maze, that he found it impossible to proceed: he tried on all sides, but he was encompassed—save the way he had come—by an extensive growth of underwood, which extended in every direction, and out of which, at very few paces distant, sprung trees of all species. He

awoke to the certainty of being compelled to return, fatigued, flesh-torn, drenched with slime and mucous filth, in a frame of mind to which a whirlwind of rage would have been a paradise of calm. In his overwhelming passion he could have inflicted death upon himself, but that he considered the question twice, and the second thoughts had the best of it. He, however, came to the sudden determination of daring everything, of returning, following the path Martin had taken, and see what was to be done in the way of escape, or of selling his life dearly; so he shook himself as a dog would who had recently left the water, by way of reassuring himself, and then started back again. He looked most carefully for all the spots where he had met disasters, and did his utmost to avoid them. His precautions were, upon the whole, successful, and with some little trouble he regained the spot from whence he had started. He stayed there for a minute, and listened whether he could hear aught indicating foes being at hand, but all was still and silent as the grave, and then he moved forward as swiftly as caution would allow. He had gained a short distance when he heard a sudden shriek rise in the air; he stopped on the instant—his heart beat loud and fast; he crouched down on the impulse of the moment in the shadow of a large tree—if shadows could exist where all was deep gloom—he waited breathlessly to hear the cry repeated, but it came not, and he at last believed it only to be the cry of a bird. He quitted his hiding place, and had not left it a moment, when he heard behind him the crashing of boughs and brushwood. It flashed through his brain in a moment that this was his implacable pursuer; he turned with the speed of lightning to meet him, springing aside at the same time to avoid any blow which might be dealt to him, and encountered, or rather just cleared himself from the bound of a large and fierce wolf. He felt relieved, doubtful as it may appear, in discovering who and what his foe was. It was a lesser evil, and, besides, he knew the nature of the brute well enough to fear him not, and resolutely attacked him, lopping off, at one blow, one of his fore-paws. The wolf uttered a long fierce howl, and started back from whence he came, leaving a long track of blood behind him. Grif laughed, and took the adventure as a good omen, and continued his path with the same speed as before.

The way grew lighter, less complex, and having gained thus far without molestation, save by the wolf, he began to indulge in the hope he should yet escape from the wood unseen, unintercepted. Even while hugging himself in this anticipation, he stumbled over something in his path with such force, as with difficulty to prevent himself from falling. He turned to see the occasion of it, and in an instant grew sick with apprehension. There lay, senseless upon the ground, a knife buried in his breast, a live snake twirling round the handle, the bleeding body of Martin du Bois; a sensation of horror crept over him. He looked quickly and suspiciously in every direction, but nothing, save the green forest things, met his sight, and the stillness was terrible. He peered into each dark place from where he stood, nervously grasping the hilt of his sword, expecting each instant to see the dreaded stranger start forth and attack him; but, except the senseless body with the fatal symbol upon it, there was nothing to indicate his proximity, and with an impulse for which he could not account, he knelt down and put his hand on Martin's body; it was warm, the heart still beat, though faintly, and he drew the knife out; a rush of blood followed; he tore handsful of grass and herbs from the ground, and stanched the wound with it. While yet occupied in this Samaritan-like act, he was certain he heard some one move among the underwood near him. He started to his feet, and took several steps as in the act of flight, and could hear that he was followed.

There was a sound of one crawling, creeping among the thick bushes; he even fancied he saw a pair of glittering eyes glaring on him from a thick-leaved spot. He hesitated for an instant what to do, but still walked rather swiftly forward, looking over his shoulder in the direction he was quitting, keeping an earnest watch upon the place in which he believed his unseen enemy was hidden; his face, ever of villanous cast, looked horrible, as a sudden opening in the trees threw a beam of light upon it. His eyes were sunken and hollow, his cheeks were haggard, his long, straggling, black hair, was matted, and waved loosely and disorderly over his unhelmeted burning brow. Close to him, far nearer than he expected, was the stranger, crouching between the trunks of two trees leaning towards each other, and imbedded in wild flowers, gorse, and bushes. With his left hand he parted the bushes aside, and with his right grasped a skean. He still wore the mask upon his face, but his mouth, the only feature visible, save his glaring eyeballs, as they shone like orbs of fire from the eyelet-holes, was compressed firmly, sternly expressive of obdurate determination. As Grif passed, he started up; the restless eyes of the fugitive caught sight of his helmet, at the same moment a hollow groan burst on his ears; it completely cowed him, and instead of turning to face his enemy, he fled—fled with all the speed he could employ, and heard the footsteps which the previous night had so fearfully echoed his own, now in full chase after him. He obtained but a slight start, but desperation lending him swiftness, he succeeded in increasing the distance between them. This agreeable discovery he made by his quickened sense of hearing telling him the sound of the pursuing feet was more distant: it stimulated him to fresh exertions; but although he was certain the distance was still greater between them than before, he could not rid himself of their sound; they still pattered untiringly after him. His breath was nearly spent in the efforts he had made; he panted and took long draughts of air, as if to supply the exhaustion, but then his limbs ached, and he feared that ere long he should be compelled to stop, completely overcome for want of breath, and unable to resist the impetuous attacks of his bloodthirsty pursuer. He dared not hazard a battle—he knew not why, but he dared not; a strong presentiment was upon him that he should be slain if he did, and he resolved not to endanger it while a hope remained of his getting unscathed out of his clutches without trusting the issue of a fight, and he kept on, though at a slackened speed, with the hope that he might yet outrun his bitter, implacable foe. The effect of his diminished speed was to make him hear the following footsteps advance nearer and nearer to him; but he found himself gradually recovering his breath, and had sufficient coolness not to increase his speed until he was enabled again to dash forward at a tremendous pace, and place a greater distance than ever between them.

He heard the footsteps closer and closer, but kept firmly to his resolve. The copse was passed, and once more he was in broad daylight. Before him lay a wide glade—the path was without obstacles—the way clear of human beings—and down he went, the stranger within a hundred feet of him. The glade was passed over, and brakes, alleys, thickets and coverts were before him. Now he knew his ground

well; knew a place in which he could, he fancied, hide securely if he could reach it. It was some distance yet, and he saw the necessity of husbanding his breath for a last effort, and resolutely determined not to increase his speed until obliged. At the very moment this resolve was crossing him, a hand grasped his shoulder, and a voice rendered husky, faint, and unconnected by panting breath, growled in his ear—

"Demon! you shall never escape me!"

He gave a bound, as if the touch was electrical—a sudden roar of terror burst from him; he was startled so considerably that he nearly fell on his

face in his leap forward, as he felt the fingers touch his shoulder. He knew that his pursuer was somewhat near, but not by a hundred yards so close; the necessity had indeed arrived to quicken his pace, and he did, but without the full success he had calculated upon; the stranger hung upon his heels, and with all his efforts was not to be distanced with the ease which his renovated breath had given him reason to expect. Through alleys and coverts they dashed, regardless of all impediments, Grif flying in a state of mind bordering on distraction; he took any opening that presented itself, nor considered to what place it led; he had in his fright forgotten his intention of making for the spot where he hoped to rest securely, and only thought of getting free from the remorseless, vindictive clutches of his pursuer.

On he went, his breath not so soon deserting him as before, and desperation making him regardless of wearied limbs; short brushwood was leaped over, gorse and brambles dashed through, hills surmounted, trees and narrow entangled copses wound among, and cleared with a facility of which none but a practised person could be capable. He had bounded and leaped so much among these impediments, that he was unable to hear whether his enemy was as close as heretofore, and as he rushed impetuously down a narrow place, he turned to look over his shoulder, and found that he had distanced him considerably, but he saw the helmet leaping up and down in pursuit between the winding trees, and knew there was yet no pause for him. He kept on, trying to raise a courage which had almost entirely left him, striving to cheer himself with the hope that he might yet escape. Before him he found, as he flew on, a winding alley of young trees, growing something in the fashion of a maze; it struck him that this would be a good place to attempt to double on the stranger, and using extra exertion he turned short off, forced his way among the thin stems, found himself almost to his waist in gorse and young shrubs, tore on with intense energy, arrived at a mass of underwood, and threw himself suddenly down among the tall grass and weeds beneath it, burying his face in it to prevent the sound of his breathing being heard. There he lay panting dreadfully, expecting each moment to hear the bounding step of the stranger, and almost to feel the point of his knife being plunged in his back; but he heard not the coming step, nor received the blade.

He was surprised, but agreeably so—ven wondered why he had not discovered the stratagem, but would not be guilty of the indiscretion of lifting up his head to look about him, anticipating that if he indulged his curiosity and did this, he would be instantly pounced upon—therefore he lay still, motionless. He remained for some time in this position unmolested, the stillness unbroken by sound of footstep far or near; he had recovered his breath, with it much of his coolness, and he asked himself, with a gladdened hope that it was so, whether he had been so fortunate as to elude the stranger; and as a still further lapse of time occurred, and nothing stirred but the leaves and flowers in the gentle wind which the morning brought, he felt a species of self-gratulation that his powers of flight had shaken off his pursuer, and his present situation was removed beyond his searching, keen surveillance; he determined not to quit it until nightfall, and then to steal from the wood entirely, get a change of habiliments at the first place where such a thing was possible, and go to some distant part of the country and try his fortunes there.

He had remained in his situation some hours; a footfall had not passed near him; the sun had reached the meridian, and was declining, when the heavy tramp of horses' feet in large number broke upon his ear; the sound increased until it came within a few yards of the spot where he lay hidden; he dared not raise his head to look who were the riders, and could hear nothing but rude voices talking together, accompanied by boisterous fits of laughter; they passed on, the sound decreased, died away, and all was again still. Was he near to the highway to Tonbridge, he asked himself, and were these horsemen just passed Sir Walter Manny's troopers? He had then but to crawl beneath the brushwood before him, lie in wait for the approach of night, and when it came, to start upon his way and quit this part of the country, in all probability, for ever. He bent his ear to the ground and held his breath, listening for the slightest sound which would indicate the neighbourhood of his foe; but silence reigned around, and he drew himself slowly and noiselessly beneath the brushwood—by little and little he did it, exercising the greatest caution. He had barely ensconced himself, and was satisfied that he had surmised correctly of his proximity to the highway to Tonbridge, when he heard again the tramp of horses' feet, but this time they were few; he peered out, but could see nothing; they were within a hundred yards of him, when he heard a voice which he recognized as being that of Sir Walter Manny, exclaim—

"So-ho, my bonny Tricksy, steady; thou need'st not caper and display thy antics; this is no devil; nor, so far as I can judge, akin to his Satanic majesty, though he weareth the garment of one whose morality is as doubtful. Well, Sir Mysterious Hero of the Snake, thou canst not pay me a visit in a worldly fashion, but must pop up from holes and secret places, when least expected."

"It suits my purpose, Sir Walter," exclaimed a voice which Grif shuddered at, as he knew it to be the voice which, but a short time since, had breathed such ominous words in his ear.

"Every man works in his own fashion," laughed Sir Walter, "and thou hast thy method; though, by the rood, it is a marvellous one to my thinking. Well, Sir Mask and Mystery, what hast thou done with that huge lump of human iniquity, that villain on a large scale, Monsieur Grif, with the sanguinary appellative? Hast thou delivered nature, who groaned at his existence, from his monstrous carcase—that compound of evils in one frame—that large growth of loathsome weeds?"

"So great a good it has not been my fortune to accomplish, Sir Walter," replied the stranger; "but I have him in my power, I know where he lies hid, though he imagines himself securely secreted, and will, when it is time, unkennel him, though he were ten times more deeply, more closely coverted. I have been on his track since I last night followed him; I have never lost sight of him, nor will, until he is dead."

Grif felt a cold tremor pass over him as the stranger uttered, or rather ground this speech between his teeth, in tones singularly relentless, and would have given worlds if he could have divested himself of the strange feeling of dread which possessed him, weakening all his faculties, and rendering him, who was once a terror to all opposers, as powerless as the most terrified wretch in existence.

"I hope you will succeed," exclaimed Sir Walter, as the stranger concluded his speech. "If he is near here, and we can turn him out, we will aid thee. I should like to see such an immeasurable scoundrel reap the full harvest of his wickedness. I can make time to hunt the rascal down; so you have only to

point out the spot where he lies, and if horse can get near him, we will have him at our mercy in a few seconds."

"I thank you for your offer, Sir Walter, but I wish that deed to be mine alone; to me he did a foul wrong, and I would have the full measure of my revenge upon him. He is in my power, and cannot escape. I sought you to speak not of him, but of one of whom I caught a hasty glimpse among your troopers as they galloped past me. You have a recruit from the village."

"I have two."

"But one of whom I would speak in particular. Wat Tyler."

"It was not Wat Tyler who was with my fellows; it was a friend of his, one Michael, who has joined my company; but Wat Tyler will be a follower of mine ere long, and what thou hast to say respecting him, let me know quickly, for I am in haste to depart."

"It matters not, since he has not yet quitted Brenchley. He is still there, I presume?"

"I left him there but now."

"It is well; when he does join you, Sir Walter, you will not have one in your troop who can cope with him; he is equal to anything; and do not have the weakness to treat him below his worth."

"Nay, never fear; Wat Tyler is not one to be treated unworthily. He would brook it less than I could be guilty of the act. I know his value, and, trust me, I shall prize it at its fullest extent. If you have nothing more to say, I will bid you farewell."

"Nothing but earnest thanks for aiding me in carrying out a revenge which, much as I wished and prayed to be satisfied, I had little hope to see done so effectually. I will no longer detain you. Farewell! may thy deeds make thy name one to be proudly repeated, and remembered by the most honourable."

"Amen!" uttered Sir Walter. "Success to thy enterprise." As he finished, accompanied by his two friends, he galloped swiftly away.

Grif listened attentively to hear what had become of the stranger, but without discovering whether he still remained where he had held the conversation with Sir Walter Manny, or whether he had secreted himself in some place similar to the one in which he lay hidden. The colloquy, though highly interesting to him, was anything but pleasing; but he rather doubted whether the stranger had spoken truth in saying he knew where he lay hidden. He thought it impossible; he had reached it, he was certain, unperceived, and had laid so noiselessly for such a length of time, that his retreat, he was sure, could not be known, though the stranger might guess he was not far off. Grif was glad he had remained so long in his present place, for if by any unfortunate impulse he had been induced to issue forth, it was evident he would have been seen and slaughtered; and remaining where he was had at least prolonged his life.

Another reason why he felt convinced the stranger did not know his hiding place was, that if he did, he would have attacked him before this: why should he not?—why? Grif pursued the question no further; he heard something moving among the brushwood near him; he started, gazed fearfully in the direction in which it appeared to arise, and was almost stunned with horror on seeing, within a few feet of him, the glittering eyes of the stranger glaring upon him through the mask. For a moment he thought he must be dreaming; but no, there they were, drawing near him slowly, but advancing; his blood curdled with affright, he had no power to move; on they came noiselessly; then a hand appeared, then another, holding a shining blade; it restored him partly to consciousness; he uttered a cry of terror, forced himself through the brushwood, and dashed down the glade, again hotly pursued by the stranger, this time apparently resolved Grif should not escape him; every now and then his fingers touched Grif's shoulder, and it caused him to leap and tear along frantically.

Away they flew, pursuer and pursued, with the speed of wind, Grif striving his utmost to keep ahead, and finding that it was only to be accomplished by doubling, turning, and every manœuvre of which the nature of the ground he passed over would admit. Grif had one advantage; his locomotive powers surpassed those of his pursuer, and enabled him to proceed without being overtaken; but it was one which was very slight, for the stranger kept so pertinaciously to him, that though he could not catch him while running at the top of his speed, Grif dared not relax his pace, for then the stranger, whose ability to endure was as great, if not greater than his, would have been up to him in a very short time. Grif, who took any path which offered itself, dashed down one which was very narrow, and was not gratified to observe it was quite a lane, each side so interwoven with tall shrubs, that there was no possibility of penetrating them, and nothing was left him but to keep forward. He soon found, by the sudden exhaustion of his breath, that he was ascending a hill; he strove to keep on at his old pace, but found it impracticable. He tried all means—bent his head so forward as not to be far from his feet—but all in vain, the ascent was so steep; he could not turn back, for behind him he heard the stranger coming—heard his loud, taunting laugh as he felt sick and tired, and endeavoured to keep a long distance between them.

It was some relief to find that the stranger's progress up the hill was not so speedy as his own, and he determined to keep on as swiftly as he could; for he expected, in descending, he should be enabled to make up the expenditure of breath it had cost him ascending. As he got nearer the top, he found himself compelled to reduce his run to a walk, and looked eagerly from right to left for some place in which he might plunge and descend diagonally, but none met his gaze; the shrubs grew thickly up, rendering any attempt he might make hopeless. One place only caught his eye, and he made eagerly to it, but started to find he was winding on the border of a deep cliff, only separated from its edge by the clustering trees. This was a hill of which he had often heard, but never had the curiosity to visit. He cursed his apathy in not having done so, for then it might have shown him the means of escape, of which now he was totally ignorant; however, there was no help for him, and he went on, turning occasionally to see if his enemy was following. There was he, with unfaltering step, winding steadily but surely up the hill, exhibiting no intention of stopping or hesitating in his progress. Grif had left his sword behind him among the brushwood when he had rushed out with sudden horror at finding the stranger so near him, at which piece of thoughtlessness he swore fearfully; if he had his two-handed sword now, he might rush down and destroy his enemy at a blow; but he had it not, and there was no alternative for him but to proceed. He thought he should never get to the top; his legs ached fearfully, and his breath went and came in loud-sounding pants; his hopes were fast fading—his courage had all departed, and he was completely the victim of despair; he was half frenzied—could have wept from

the very agony of despair. Twenty times he thought of laying down and meeting his death at once, rather than endure longer what he was now suffering; then the horrors of dying came on him with terrible force, and he tried his best again to keep on; then his hopes revived, for the way grew wider, the trees more straggling—large birds flew out with shrill screams, soaring high into the air. By these tokens he knew he was near the top. With a fresh effort of strength he increased his pace, and in another minute burst out into the open air. He discovered himself to be on the summit of a high cliff; beneath him he saw the country extending for miles; he rushed to the brow of the hill, intending to descend on the other side, but, on reaching it, started back with the utmost precipitation, in intense horror. He was on the very verge of a precipice, descending perpendicularly to an immense depth; his every nerve quivered with fright; he had barely saved himself from being dashed to pieces, and was ready to sink to the ground with the shock; but a shout from the stranger recalled his scattered senses, and again he put his weary limbs into motion, running along the edge of the cliff as it extended upwards on his left hand. His eager, but alarmed eyes soon, with sickening apprehension, perceived and told him that he was upon the jutting pinnacle of a vast natural amphitheatre of chalk, divided and rendered impracticable of access by the embankment of trees and shrubs which he found impenetrable in his ascent. He was on a spot to him now isolated. What was to be done? There were no means of approach or quittal but by the way he came, and that way was guarded by his inveterate foe.

All hope was lost!

Death—violent and unescapable death—stared him in the face. Flight was impossible. Again he cast one hurried glance around him; there was no outlet. He looked anxiously over the edge of the cliff; it shelved beneath his feet. He drew back shudderingly—he tore his hair and groaned with gnashing teeth; despair was in his heart; a dreadful fate awaited him here, within a few minutes—what hereafter? He dared not think. His frame was convulsed with the bitter thoughts thronging upon him, like so many demoniac spirits shouting in his ear the terrible doom about to be inflicted upon him. He grew frenzied; there was no escape—none, none. He turned to the narrow lane of trees by which he had ascended—his teeth locked together, his hands clenched. He saw the stranger dashing towards him, brandishing the fatal knife. He uttered a cry of horror; the stranger had discarded his helmet and mask—his face was bare of disguise—he knew it instantly; it was that of Mat Snake. But there was another remembrance which rose up like a spirit from the grave of memory; he recognised in it one who, in looking upon him as Mat Snake, when a member of his band, was unremembered; but now the recollection forced itself vividly upon him, it was also the husband of Editha, and he knew that mercy was not for him—that his death-shriek would be music in the ears of the terrible comer, the deadly avenger of the wrongs he had endured—and his heart grew cold. On came the stranger. Grif looked behind him; he was near the edge of the cliff—destruction was behind and before him; a reaction took place within him—desperation did its work—he was as a tiger at bay.

"I must die, I must die!" he muttered, grinding his teeth hard; "but I will not fall alone. Spirit! devil! or man! I will sell my last moments dearly!"

He drew his knife from his girdle, uttered a loud fierce cry, more of despair than defiance, and rushed to meet his foe. The stranger saw the movement, checked his speed, stopped, and received Grif's attack firmly, and with the coolness of a determination not to give away the slightest chance. Grif's blow with his knife was parried; he struck again with all the strength and fierceness of which he was master; again the stranger received the knife upon his weapon, and gave it such a desperate jerking twist as nearly to break Grif's wrist, as well as render his hand suddenly powerless, his dagger being whirled out of his grasp. A second was not allowed him to recover; the stranger sprang on him and seized him with the left hand by the throat, compressing his fingers with an intense energy, and then threw his whole weight upon him with a sudden dash. Grif, worn out by excess of terrible excitement and fatigue, was unable to stand against it, and was hurled to the ground with a tremendous shock. The instinct of self-preservation, however, induced him to catch the stranger's wrist as it was in the act of descending, dealing a deadly blow, and grasp it firmly, at the same time essaying to thrust him from his chest, upon which he was kneeling; but this was not to be accomplished, although Grif struggled tremendously. The stranger was the stronger of the two, and in the possession of an advantage he had not the slightest intention of yielding; and when, after the most desperate exertions, garnished profusely with fierce oaths, this was too painfully evident to Grif, he looked his conquering foe appealingly in the face, and cried, in a voice quivering with contending emotions—

"Spare my life—spare my life! Have mercy, as you hope for it hereafter!"

"Dog!" roared the stranger, "not a minute—a second—after my hand is free!"

"Nay, be not so relentless. What have I done to thee that thou shouldst thus pursue me with such remorseless animosity?"

"Wretch!" half shrieked the stranger, struggling to get his hand at liberty, "durst thou ask me that question? Butcher, bloody-minded monster! hast thou not blasted me—withered, broken a heart once boundlessly rich in happiness—torn from me vilely a being more dear to me, more prized, than worlds of precious stones? Hast thou not beggared me of all hope of joy—made me live years, oh God! countless ages of misery—and now canst ask me what thou hast done to me that I should seek a life—I will have—aye, I will have, though the next instant hurl me to everlasting perdition. Thy struggles are vain—thou'rt mine, mine! Ha, ha, ha! I have dreamed, dwelled, gloated on the hope that this would come to pass—that I should have thee thus beneath me—that I should hold thy throat within my crushing grasp, and should shriek in thine ears—thy hour is come! Bloodhound! this to thy heart, this—"

"Hold, hold thy hand!" shouted Grif, in terrified accents, as the stranger with fearful exertions strove to disengage his wrist and bury his dagger to the hilt in the body of his prostrate antagonist. "Hold! hear me! spare my life, and I will tell thee all I know respecting Editha: I will tell thee where to find her, if thou wilt spare my life."

"Ha! what of her? what knowest thou more of her than that thou didst drag her from my happy home, and that her heart broke, her gentle spirit fled to heaven, escaping the vile thraldrom a villain thine equal in iniquity imposed upon her? You will tell me where to find her—aye, her grave—her grave—"

"No, she lives!"

"Great God! lives?—lives?—wretch, trifle not with me; dare not! a death by my dagger shall be mercy to what I will inflict upon thee if thou dost play with and torture my feelings to madness, by uttering lies to save thy miserable life."

"I speak the truth, as I believe myself to be on the verge of a certain and dreadful death. I repeat, she lives! I know where she is confined, can guide thee to her prison, and setting her free, place her once more in thy arms, spotless and uncontaminated as when she quitted them. You need not doubt me; I am in your power most effectually; if you find I play you false, do as you will with me, I swear I will not resist. Take your hand from about my throat, hear my story, and then judge of its truth. If you believe it worthy of credence, when thou knowest it, spare my life, and she shall be yours; if you should still doubt it, you have the power to wreak your vengeance upon me, for I may as well confess I am completely exhausted, without the power longer to resist thy lightest effort."

"I will hear thee, but thou hadst better have leaped from this lofty ridge into the impatient arms of death, than seek to cajole me by lies, that thou mayest continue a career already enormously overladen with guilt and crime. I take my fingers from thy throat, but my dagger's point is within an inch of thy heart; the smallest movement for escape, or attack, will unerringly bury it to the hilt there. Now, to thy story, quickly and without prevarication, and beware that thou utterest nought but truth."

As he concluded, he withdrew his hands from about Grif's throat, and suffered him to sit up, but kept, as he promised, his dagger ready for instant use, if Grif attempted to infringe an iota on the agreement.

"Of that thou shalt thyself be judge," ejaculated Grif faintly; "'twould be a vain attempt to endeavour to deceive thee, for there is not a circumstance but thou canst with ease fathom and detect in an instant, if I speak less than truth."

"To thy story," cried the stranger, impatiently.

"Allow me a moment to recover my breath, and recal my scattered senses, and then thou shalt have to complain of no tardiness in my speech," said Grif, clearing his voice, and putting his hands round his neck, as if to feel that the stranger's firm grasp had not made a wound. Upon being satisfied with the result of his scrutiny, and observing the stranger's patience all but gone, he thus commenced:—

"When you wooed the fair Editha, were you aware that Sir John Maltravers, thy lord, was also marvellously smitten with her beauty?"

"Not at the time—not then: would I had! Oh, that I had! How much misery might have been spared me! But I was a weak-headed fool: I heard so—my gentle wife said as much, but to me he denied it; and, credulous idiot that I was, I too well believed him, until circumstances, fatally for me, proved otherwise. Proceed, proceed!"

"I had served under Sir John before he was created a baron; and from what he had seen of my devotion to him, he believed he could put implicit faith in me. One morning, soon after thy wedding, he sent for me secretly to his presence. I obeyed his command; and, when he was quite satisfied that we were alone, he asked me if I was willing to do him an important service, for which I should be most handsomely rewarded. At that time money was my idol: I would have dared all—the redemption of my soul—for gold. It seems his lordship could read as much in my character, and commenced a relation of the service he required of me by placing a heavily stocked purse in my hand, telling me it was but a forerunner of what was to come. He then spoke of thee as a faithful servant, but as a bad man—"

"Ingrate!" interrupted the stranger, muttering through his teeth, yet speaking earnestly. "I would have thrown my heart's blood away for him and at that time my breast was free from an evil thought."

"He said," continued Grif, scarce pausing for the interruption, "that you were united to one for whom, he had no scruple in confessing, he felt a strong partiality, and a determination to possess her—"

"Villain!" groaned the stranger, between his teeth.

"He said also that she had wedded without loving you, and then lived very unhappily with you—your conduct being barbarous, tyrannical, and unmanly—"

"Liar! thrice ten thousand times, a liar most damnable! The very angels in heaven lived not more happily than did we. Treacherous monster! he shall not escape me; he shall yet perish on the scaffold."

"You know, then, there is a hot pursuit for him?"

"Know it? Have I not put the bloodhounds on the scent? Has he not by my means been tracked from hole to corner through the country? and though he is hidden, ere long he shall hang—hang from a tall gallows. But go on with thy story—my heart sickens to think of him."

Grif could not prevent a cold shudder passing over him as he beheld the intense, relentless bitterness with which the stranger uttered his words, and felt apprehensive that his fate would be no less terrible and certain than that of the noble of whom they were speaking; he tried to shake it off, and returned to his relation.

"When he had assured me," he continued, "of the unhappiness with which you dwelt together, he said that he had determined to have her carried off, to which she would be a willing agent, and have her placed in the castle of a relative, where he had at all times free access, and sought me as a fit instrument to put his design into execution. He commanded the strictest secresy, for having been recently wedded to the only daughter of the wealthy and powerful Earl of Berkeley, he feared, for very obvious reasons, that it should reach her ears; not the least powerful one being the able ally you would find in the Earl of Berkeley to revenge the wrong done you. I quickly and fully entered into his views. It was arranged that he should command you to attend him to a hunt, and that, during your absence, I, with four comrades upon whom I could depend, should enter your dwelling and carry off your wife. This plan was worked out; you attended Sir John Maltravers to the hunt, and we entered your cottage. Editha was there, apparently alone. She was alarmed at our sudden appearance; but I, believing all Sir John had told me, stated the errand upon which we had come, fully expecting that, knowing she was to be the mistress of a Baron, living wretchedly with you, as he said, she would gladly consent. But I was not suffered long to remain under my mistake; she repulsed me with the bitterest scorn, spoke in terms of direct hate of the Baron, and bade us at once begone, or she would summon the serfs, and have us forcibly ejected. I did not for an instant doubt that she uttered no more than she really meant and intended, for her beautiful flushed cheeks bore the impress of the insult her dignity, her virtue, had received. It was useless to bandy words, there was not time; and I seized her in my arms, intending to place her on my steed by force—"

"Wretch!" growled the stranger; "oh that I had been there!"

"But she resisted me," continued Grif, not heeding the interruption, apparently absorbed in his remembrance of what had passed at that time; "she struggled with all the strength she was capable of, filled the air with her shrieks, and endeavoured by clinging to household things to prevent my dragging her away. Her cries alarmed two servants who were without, and they entered in haste. On seeing what our in-

tentions were, they resolutely attacked us; they fought desperately, but were cut down and killed. Editha was gagged, and we bore her away. As was anticipated, you made most strenuous exertions to recover her, but the search being under the superintendence of Sir John, as a matter of course the seekers were always put on a wrong scent. We were, however, once being nearly discovered. One of the fellows who accompanied me, not being satisfied with the pay I gave, sought you and offered to disclose the secret of her abode, upon payment of the reward offered by Sir John only to gull you. You waited upon him for the money, which he gave you, but instantly sought me, and in some alarm mentioned what had occurred. I knew the offender, for he had taken no pains to conceal his discontent at the sum he had received for his share of the work. I sought him, challenged him with his intent to betray us, and promised him a sum greater than the reward to hold his tongue. He greedily assented, and acknowledged that he had been to you making the offer. While still making conditions with him as to the amount he was to have, I took advantage of an unguarded moment, and stabbed him to the heart, and then cut his throat to make sure of his death. I threw him into the moat, where he was next morning discovered. Your wife, Editha, was immoveable to all the entreaties of Sir John; to every prayer, protestation, vow, however urgent, she was inflexible; and he was fool enough to fear taking by force what was denied to entreaty—"

"Spare your comment," cried the stranger, with a sudden fierceness, "or I may not my knife."

Grif bent his head with a tremendous frown, but he was in no condition to help himself, and so shrugging his shoulders, proceeded:—

"He tried every argument that an oily tongue could invent to make her consent to be his, but in vain; he could not move her, and he began to consider that if he could rid himself of you, he should stand a better chance. He communicated his dark thoughts to me; I consented to put you out of the way—bloodshed or human life was a matter of little moment to me then, so that I was well paid; but I was deterred from putting his wish into execution by a strange circumstance. I should have told you that Editha was borne to Berkeley Castle, where it was well managed, that she was confined in a distant wing for nearly four years, without any one but Sir John and I being the wiser. His wife, the Lady Maltravers, also dwelled there, preferring Berkeley Castle to her husband's; she was delivered of a young female child there, and soon afterwards Editha managed to elude all our vigilance, and escape from her apartment. She was making her way to the entrance, when she was suddenly encountered by Sir John and his lady; he had barely time to whisper in her ear, that one word from her to his wife of what had occurred would consign you to instant and irrevocable death, when she was fondly greeted by Lady Maltravers, who inquired the reason of her sudden disappearance from her home—aye, woman like, asked her a hundred questions in a breath.

"Editha had time to recover herself while this flood of interrogations was pouring upon her, and, to save you, invented some excuse which satisfied her former mistress, and accounted for her appearance by a desire, after so long an interval, to once more see a lady who had ever treated her with unremitting kindness. Lady Maltravers suspected nothing, and implicitly believed all she had heard. She bade Editha stay with her as long as she pleased, and at once accompany her to her boudoir, to which our late captive assented. Sir John took an opportunity to appear to welcome her, and intimated that any attempt to escape or disclose what had transpired would be visited heavily upon you. She well knew his ruthless nature, and was thus induced by your danger to remain more securely a prisoner than if she had been immured in a dungeon. Some two or three months subsequent to this, Sir John's child, which was a daughter, strangely disappeared, and, though every endeavour was made to discover it, they were made in vain—it was never found.

"At this time Sir John grew weary of so much entreaty, and resolved at once to conquer, as he fancied he could, your wife's scruples by your death; and again I received the order to put it into execution. I accompanied his lordship to his castle, where you were then residing. He came in order to see that you might be more completely in his power by commanding your close attendance, and my work from some secret corner would have been easy; however, again, I suppose, by a special interference of Providence—I thought little of those things then, I think more of them now—your life was spared by a request you made immediately on his arrival, to quit his service for ever, intending, as you said, to leave the country never to return. Sir John gladly gave you his permission, countermanded his order to me from some compunctious visitings, and you were suffered to depart safely. Soon after you were gone, a tale was made up, and Editha was informed of your death. The story was well concerted, the proofs startling, but failed to convince her. By some extraordinary means she was acquainted with the truth, knew of your departure, and even told his lordship that she was cognizant of your dwelling-place. He was astonished no less than enraged to find his plans abortive; and if he could have ascertained whither you had directed your steps, no human interference would have saved your life. At this time also his wife got some hint of his passionate attachment to the beautiful Editha, and was also aware how excessively repugnant his addresses were to her; she kept such a vigilant watch over her, that Sir John was unable to carry out any of the many intentions he had planned, and in a fury at the interference, he determined that it should be repaid by poison."

"Execrable monster! did he conceive so hellish a project as to poison his young and lovely wife?"

"Ay, did he! In all such matters I was his prime agent; I was to procure the poison, and he was to administer it—but the wicked plan was not executed, and I was the cause."

"You? you? had you ever in your life one touch of remorse?"

"Oh, no, it was not remorse—it's no use to lie about it. I had often been surprised at the excessive infatuation of Sir John for Editha; at length, in looking much upon her very handsome face, I fell in love with it."

"Thou?" laughed the stranger, with intense scorn.

"Aye, I, who never looked with loving eyes upon human being before or since, regarded her with a feeling I know not how to describe; and I determined to rescue her from Sir John's clutches, and have her myself. My plans were well laid. I had, in furthering the designs of his lordship, unquestioned access to her, and one day I sought her, and told her if she would grant me a private interview, I had something to communicate respecting you. Doubting me, yet deeply anxious to hear of you, she consented, and the meeting was granted. I then hatched up a story of having received benefits from you, and said I felt compunction for having united with Sir John to effect her ruin; but I no longer intended to continue the

villany, for I could see she was daily growing paler and thinner, which was the truth.—"

"My poor, deeply-wronged Editha," groaned the stranger, dashing a tear from his eye.

"—And told her," continued Grif, "that if she would trust herself with me, I would contrive her escape, and lead her to you. You might both then seek some distant land, and once more live happily together."

"Did you intend to fulfil your promise?" asked the stranger, fixing his bright eyes steadily and searchingly upon Grif's countenance, as if he would detect the shadow of a lie if he attempted to utter it. Grif could not bear the gaze, and turned his face uneasily away as he replied,—

"No! I have promised to tell you the truth, and I will keep my word. I contrived to affect such a sincerity of manner, that though from bitter experience she was doubtful of all, she confided in me; almost frantic with delight at my success, I arranged my plans, and at a moment when such a step was least expected, I led her from the castle. We were far beyond the reach of pursuit ere our flight was discovered. I was not long in exhibiting my feelings and intentions towards her. I shall never forget the horror she expressed when, in distinct terms, I unfolded to her the real motive which had induced me to aid and accompany her flight, nor the almost mad manner she flung herself at my feet, imploring me, if I had one grain of mercy in me, to restore her unpolluted to you; but I was troubled with no such weakness, and gave her to understand I was not like Sir John. I gave her an hour to consider whether she would give her consent to live as a wife with me, or have it extorted from her in a manner which should render all refusal negative. She wept, shrieked in despair, bade me slay her; but I was deaf to all. I returned in an hour to her: she gave me a flat denial, taunted me with my villany, acted as though she was in a state of frenzy, and so excited my ire, that I resolved, though the gulph of hell had yawned at my feet, and the consummation of my desires precipitated me into its liquid fires, I would that instant accomplish my intention. I seized her in my arms—she struggled, but she was as a weak child in my power, and I laughed at her futile efforts. She shrieked with such shrill screams as to almost destroy my sense of hearing; there were none near to hear them, had they been thrice as loud—'twas all in vain—"

"Damnable monster!" shouted the stranger, seizing Grif by the throat, and upraising the dagger, ready to bury it in his heart—"Dare not tell me you succeeded in your brutal, monstrous purpose."

"Hold!" roared Grif. "Hear me—take your hands from my throat—hear me out!"

The stranger, with burning eyes, and his hand but slowly descending, removed reluctantly his grasp from Grif's throat, but seemed ready to spring upon him, if a word reached his ear in confirmation of the horrid foreboding that was upon him, and in a voice hoarse and thick, he forced out with difficulty—

"Proceed—go on—my heart sickens within me; tell me all the truth—go on."

"I told you her struggles and cries were vain, but not so her actions. While wrestling with me, her hand caught in the hilt of my long-bladed dagger, a weapon I prided myself on for its intense sharpness; she drew it hastily forth, and plunged it with all her force in my breast several times; blood poured from me like water. I strove, in spite of my wounds, to subdue her, but she still held the dagger, and repeated, with mad energy, the blows, as I exerted myself to overcome her. The place soon began to whirl round with me, I felt faint, powerless; could no longer hold her; she tore herself from my grasp and fled. I remember no more—I fell and swooned away. None of the wounds, though deep, were fatal. I was discovered, I imagine, soon after she had quitted me, and my wounds were dressed; it was some time ere I recovered: at length I did sufficiently to quit my pallet. I endeavoured to trace her, and by an accident discovered her place of refuge."

"What asylum had she found?" inquired the stranger, eagerly.

"Not very far from the cottage in which the scene I have just related transpired, stands a convent. I had some suspicion that she had fled thither, but for some time I could not ascertain whether she had sought and entered it. At length a confessor, who attended there, came by chance across me. I questioned him respecting the most recent inmates, and by much cunning and ingenuity, drew from him that a female, with garments soaked in blood, had, at the time Editha fled from me, obtained admittance; but I could not learn how she had accounted for the blood upon her dress—whether she had told the truth, or had invented some excuse; but this mattered not to me—I knew her abode, and determined to be revenged. At first I thought of charging her with being a murderess, and subjecting her to the tender mercy of the superior to be secretly punished; but death would soon put an end to those sufferings, and that was not sufficient for me. After some thought, I hit upon a scheme—I encountered a man in a lone place near there, robbed and murdered him; I dragged him to my cot, and then went to the convent and begged assistance for one Ethelbert Evesham, who had been waylaid, and nearly murdered. Help was sent, but the man was dead, and those who came to assist returned with the story. I found afterwards it was as successful as I could have desired. Suffering a period to elapse, I returned to the neighbourhood of Berkeley Castle, where I learned that Lady Maltravers had attributed Editha's flight to some undue contrivance of Sir John, and vowed unless she were restored, she would no longer live with him. This was a matter of impossibility for her husband to accomplish without my aid, and I sent to advertise him that I could tell him where she was hidden, upon consideration of a handsome reward. He was too dependent on the Berkeley family to hazard a quarrel with them, and, forgiving my secession from him, eagerly closed with my demand. I then told him all—as I have told you—and he went to the convent; but she, agonized at the thoughts of your death, broken in spirit, stricken with unassuageable grief, had taken the veil."

"What?" cried the stranger, "can it be possible!—taken the veil?"

"Even so, as I have said," replied Grif, chuckling at the expression of excessive anguish visible upon the countenance of Ethelbert, as we shall henceforth designate the stranger.

"Great Heaven! is this thy justice? This the reward of years of ceaseless misery, that she should be found only to be lost to me for ever. Holy Mary! in all my anticipations—hopes of the future, of death, of disaster, I looked not to have the cup thus dashed from my lips; but the will of Heaven be done. Hast thou more to say?"

"Nothing, save that I know Editha still to be at the convent, and can point out to thee where it stands."

"Where is it?"

"I will lead thee to it."

"I will not trust thee, until I know where it is situated."

"Be it as you will. About four or five miles south of Wickwar, beneath the ridge of hills which extend along that part of the country, and about twenty miles from Berkeley, stands the convent which contains her."

"I know it. Now, answer me with truth—dost thou know the retreat of Sir John Maltravers?"

"Why dost thou ask me that question? I have not seen him for years."

"I know when you saw him—know that you were one of the wretches who aided in destroying our late unfortunate king, Edward."

"Ha!" cried Grif, with a sudden start, "how know you that?"

"It matters not: I do know it. Do you suppose I have been so long on your track that your greatest crimes are hidden from me? Was I so long among thy crew of murderous villains that I did not hourly hear of thy enormities? Listen to me, Grif—or in thy, if possible, more infernal name, William Ogle—if thou dost deliver Sir John Maltravers into my hands, and will swear that he was present, and instigated and commanded thee to perpetrate the hellish cruelties which thou and Gourney didst inflict on Edward of Caernarvon, I will promise thee thy liberty, and a large sum of money to boot. Answer quickly—I must have no hesitation: yea or nay."

"I do not know where he is, but I think I can find him."

"No equivocation," cried Ethelbert, on perceiving Grif speak as if he was hatching some plot. "Gourney was beheaded through me; for I at that time fancied, in tracing his retreat, I was securing you. And you shall not escape me if you discover the slightest intention to play me false. I bid thee, therefore, beware!"

"I am in your power and must submit. I will do as you wish. Sir John is in the Forest of Dean; his son, whom you this morning stabbed, has, during his father's troubles, been living with his uncle, the Earl of Berkeley, under the name of Martin du Bois."

"I know it. In what part of the Forest of Dean is Sir John hidden?"

"He is living with a band who dwell in the forest. I am known to most of them, and can easily find him when required."

"It is well! Know you why Martin du Bois visited Halbert Evesham?"

"No."

"Enough! now rise and follow me. For the last time I caution thee; the appearance of an attempt to escape will bring thee certain death."

"I shall remember," exclaimed Grif, rising to his feet, seemingly with stiffened, weakened limbs. Ethelbert advanced a few paces and looked at him with suspicious eyes, until he was close upon him; then he advanced again, a short distance before him. Grif, with an eager glance, observed him pass unnoticingly the knife, which lay upon the turf, where it had fallen when whirled from his grasp. He made a dart at it; gained it—grasped it—and dashed it at Ethelbert like lightning, to bury it to the hilt in his back; but he was overheard. Ethelbert sprang aside to avoid the blow; it just grazed his shoulder, as Grif roared—

"Thou knowest too much. I will not trust myself, now I have a weapon, in thy power."

"Indeed!" sneered the stranger, making towards him with his hand firmly clenching his long dagger. "We will see that, thou sanguinary, wolfish hell-hound!"

"No!" shouted Grif, making ready for a desperate attack; "I will perish rather!"

"Then perish!" cried Ethelbert, springing upon him with a fierce dash of his weapon. Grif received and parried it, and tried to seize him by the throat; but he was anticipated, and was met by a terrific gash in his extended arm, making him with speed withdraw it, howling in pain. He retreated to collect himself; but Ethelbert gave him no opportunity: he followed him up close, striking with swiftness, and changing the direction of his blows with such rapidity that Grif could not, unwounded, ward them off. His foe gave a harsh, guttural, exulting laugh, and pressed him still more, pointing with his finger to the spot he was retreating on.

A hasty glance behind him filled him with the direst fright and horror—he was falling back on the edge of the cliff: two or three more steps would precipitate him down its dreadful depth. A cold shudder ran through him—he sprang forward, but his antagonist did not give him an inch of ground. He grew more desperate than ever, and struck wildly, regardless of the wounds he was receiving.

He retreated sideways. A tree grew near the edge of the cliff—he made towards it. Just as he reached it, his hand which held his dagger was gashed across the fingers, and, with the intense pain, he was compelled to drop his only weapon of defence. He clutched at the stem of the tree, which he had succeeded in nearing, but not, as he had hoped, so near as to get a firm hold.

He missed his grasp, and clutched again, just catching a straggling branch which started out from the stem. At the same moment he received a violent dash of Ethelbert's arm in his breast, which sent him staggering backwards. In spite of the most tremendous efforts, his foot slipped over the brink of the cliff. He fell, but, keeping firm hold of the small branch, he was brought up with a jerk which nearly dislocated his shoulder.

He shrieked with terror and agony, screamed for mercy, made protestations which were almost yells of despair.

There was but this frail branch, to which he clung with the tenacity of maddening frenzy, between him and eternity. It bent and cracked with his weight. He grasped with his remaining hand and his feet, at the turf and the shelving sides of the cliff, to find sufficient to bear up his weight, but the grass, very short and fine, eluded his fingers, or came away by the roots, and the chalk mouldered and crumbled away from beneath his feet. There were years of agony compressed into that one brief minute.

He felt dizzy, giddy, sightless. He knew he was hanging over a precipice of at least five hundred feet, suspended only, comparatively to the weight it had to sustain, by a thin twig; frantically he screamed for mercy—how frenzied were his efforts to spring upon the top of the cliff again; but in vain. He foamed at the mouth; he felt his arm would no longer sustain the weight of his body; he called upon demons, blasphemed, execrated, in terms the most terrible to hear, the foul fiend who now had deserted him;—he uttered frightful anathemas upon the name of his Maker, and Ethelbert waited to hear no more; he threw himself at the foot of the tree, grasped its trunk firmly, and had raised his knife to plunge into his foe's breast, when the twig broke, and down went the body of Grif—down, down, until it was received among the loose masses of chalk lying at the base.

Ethelbert watched it until it disappeared, and then springing to his feet, cried energetically, with his hands upraised in the air——

"Oh God, I thank thee! Editha, thou art avenged!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"Recover'd from that death-like swoon—
But scarce to reason—every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense;
And each frail fibre of her brain
(As bowstrings, when relax'd by rain,
The erring arrow launch aside)
Sent forth her thoughts all wild and wide."

Byron.

IMMEDIATELY Violet and Wat Tyler observed the condition to which the intelligence of the sudden departure of Michael had reduced Flora, they raised her and used every means to restore her; but she no sooner recovered than she relapsed, and continued falling from one fainting fit into another, until they began to fear she would pass from insensibility to death. At length a

flood of tears came to her aid, after being recovered from a swoon of long duration, and Violet hoped that the paroxysm with its danger was over. She soothed her with gentle words, but Flora would not be comforted—she sobbed bitterly.

"He's gone!" she cried, in words which her sobs nearly rendered inarticulate. "He is gone! and I have driven him away from his home, his friends, from happiness. Would I had been dead ere he saw me. Would to heaven we had never met."

"Do not give way to grief so violently, dear Flora," said Violet, trying to cheer her, "he will be back again soon."

"Oh no, no," wept Flora, "he will never come back again—never! never; I have sent him forth through my wicked levity, my ungrateful conduct, a wanderer among strangers, with a broken heart; I, whom he loved so dearly, so very dearly, that he had no thought but for me, no wish but to make me happy, would have died for me, I know he would—I know he would—and I have sported with his kindness, trifled with his feelings, and acted shamelessly—vilely, to the truest, kindest, most affectionate creature on earth."

"I would he could hear you say so—all would be forgotten," said Wat, much moved by the utter prostration of mind Flora exhibited.

"Oh that he could," she cried eagerly, "oh that he could!" and then fell upon her knees sobbing out passionately, "Wat—Wat Tyler, he loves you; you have never tried his heart, till it snapped, as I have—as I have, miserable, wicked wretch that I am; go to him, seek him out—tell him, pray him to return; beg him, entreat him, even if you implore him upon your bended knees, as now I do you, to come back; say to him I am punished by my own feelings as bitterly as the sternest desire for revenge could wish; tell him I ask him not to forgive me, for I cannot forgive myself; I do not ask him to speak, to see one who has wronged him, as I have, more; but bid him, if ever he has loved me—and too well I know he has—if he loves you, and would do you the greatest obligation one friend can do another, to come back to his home; cruel and callous as I have been to him, I would not die with the terrible weight upon my conscience of having caused him to leave for ever his birth place, his only parent who loved him, who looks to him only for the little happiness she may see in this world, to become homeless, friendless; to seek the terrible wars, and perhaps be killed. Oh Heaven! that I could have been so mad, so wicked. Fly to him, Wat; bring him back; you can do as you please with him, for you were ever kind to him—never wounded his generous, confiding nature, as I have. You will do this for me, Wat, I am sure you will, for I am most wretched, most miserable——"

"I fear it is too late," said Wat, sadly.

"No, no, it cannot be," almost shrieked Flora; "do not refuse me, Wat, if you would not see me fall dead before you. I deserve all your coldness—I merit every harshness; but spare me, do not show me unkindness, though it is richly my due. I cannot bear it, it will kill me; my heart feels crushing, bursting. Do this kind act for me, Wat; you can do it—I am sure you can; and you will, will you not? I see you consent—you must, you must! Deny me not, and I will pray heaven to bless you unweariedly."

"Be more calm, Flora," said Wat, soothingly; "do not thus give way to despair; Michael will be back safe again, never fear. He has got too far, now, to overtake, but Heaven is kind to all, and I have little doubt but that he will be spared to come back again, a wiser and a richer man, and you may yet be happy together."

"Oh, Wat, your words wring my heart," she exclaimed, wringing her hands bitterly. "Too far to overtake? he cannot be too far to overtake—not by you; you, who can dare and do anything. But you refuse; I have wronged your dearest friend, and you spurn me from you, and will not grant my request. Oh, Wat, be not so unkind to me! Violet, Violet, intercede for me with Wat; he loves you, and there is nothing you can ask him, that he will deny, were even death in the request; oh, join with me in begging him to restore Michael to his home. Dear, dear Violet, you know how fondly I have always loved you; I have never, in thought or deed, wronged you—have I? No, you know I have not, and you have always seemed to return the affection I have borne you; show me now that I have not been deceived, by prevailing upon Wat to depart instantly; you will not desert me, I know. Do not—do not; my heart will break—break!"

She buried her head in her hands, and sobbed hysterically; Violet stooped over her, and placed her arm affectionately round her waist, saying kindly—

"Dear Flora, dry up your tears, all will yet be well; whatever weight words of mine will have to induce Wat to become your messenger, shall be employed in thy favour. Come, look up, Flora, the evil is not past remedy."

Flora shook her head mournfully. Wat, assisting Violet, raised her to her feet, and said—

"Flora, I need no intercession on the part of our dear friend Violet, to induce me to comply with thy wish. If I appear to hesitate in doing what you so earnestly desire of me, it is that I would not raise hopes which may not be, though much desired, realized; but if it will be any satisfaction to thee that the attempt is made, ere nightfall I will depart from here to London in quest of him.

"Now, Heaven bless you for your kindness, Wat," cried Flora, fervently, grasping his hand with the greatest earnestness; "you will see him, I am sure you will, and tell him how unhappy I am at his absence. Tell him how much I regret my unpardonable treatment of him, but that though so unkind, it was only thoughtlessness—a foolish, mad weakness which came over me; that I never loved him less, one atom, when I appeared to care for him least; indeed—indeed I did not; that if he will forgive me the anguish I have caused him, I will never, while I live, inflict a pang upon him again. Tell him how very miserable I am that I should have brought this unhappy occurrence to pass, but my future conduct to him shall prove how sincerely I repent it, how plainly I see my error, and how firm is my resolve never to be guilty of the like conduct. If he will not forgive me—if he will not see me—I—I shall feel it deeply, but will not think harshly of him, for I have justly deserved it, and will do my best to bear it without complaint; nor, if repulsive to him, will I seek to make him change his determination. I will bear anything—even his hatred—which will be very, very hard to endure—if he will but return—if he will only return. Oh, never leave him, Wat, until he consents. He must consent; if he does not, I shall weep myself to death. I shall be miserable for ever—I—I shall go mad—I feel that I shall—and that my heart will burst—will burst—as it feels now. O Michael, Michael! that I should have thus wantonly wrung thy heart—thine—thine." Tears choked her words; she clasped her hands, and seemed completely overwhelmed by a torrent of grief; her frame shook convulsively—her sobs increased until they were hy-

sterical. She became almost as one distracted, and it was with the very greatest difficulty and attention that she was in any degree calmed. When her two friends had succeeded in their kind, though painful task, Violet induced her to retire to her chamber; and Wat told her that he would strive hard to place, ere she was many days older, Michael once more in her society. She wrung his hands fervently, but could not trust herself to speak, and suffered Violet to lead her from the room.

When they were gone, Wat threw himself into a chair to reflect upon an idea which his promise to Flora had suddenly suggested; it was upon the prudence of putting his intention of quitting Brenchley for a long period into effect, at the same time that he went in quest of Michael; his heart palpitated as he sat down to ponder and weigh both sides of the question well before he came to a conclusion, which, if too hastily arrived at, he might have reason to repent.

One point which carried great influence with it, and was the one indeed which created the idea, that one parting would suffice for his temporary and final quittal. He conceived, with some shrewdness and consideration, that the farewell he should take for a short absence would be unaccompanied by the pangs which would be felt were he to part with them, all parties knowing that years might elapse ere they again met, or perhaps never be permitted to look upon each other more. There were so many different ties of strong affection which bound Wat Tyler to Brenchley, that to separate from them was like sundering his heart strings: it was the spot where he had passed the happiest hours of his existence, which contained all that he held dear on earth—love, friends, home, everything. It was possible still to remain—still to be comparatively happy. There was no actual necessity for him to leave—an act which was undesired, would be regretted, and deemed little less than a mad delusion by all his friends, when it was made known, but himself. He felt satisfied as to its necessity—to its imperative necessity; and, be the consequences to himself what they might, he would carry it out. There was no selfishness in the resolve—rather a self-sacrifice.

It was not for his own benefit—not because he should or might be happier—not that he could gain in all things by mixing in the world so much more than by spending his days in his own quiet little village—not that he should add one iota to the improvement of his condition, albeit he had much ambition on that point, that he determined on his present step; no, all thoughts of self-aggrandisement, future joy and welfare, were unconsidered, uncared for, unconceived; he remembered not himself, what position he might assume, whether he would be adorned with a laurel wreath, or whether the dismal cypress should wave over an early grave. All such thoughts were unimagined in inducing him to decide on this one act, which would have such an influence on his future fate. No, there was but one motive, one all-absorbing inducement; he believed truly, divested of interested inclinings, that Violet—the dearly beloved—would have her happiness, her position, in the circle of an undisturbed unalloyed course of pleasant years, secured by his departure, his absence.

There were two reasons which led him powerfully to entertain this belief: first, the settled opinion—one which forced itself strongly upon his mind and fortified itself by analogies which he was unconsciously in the habit of drawing, and which strengthened his conception much, that Violet was of noble birth. He knew that Halbert Evesham was only her foster-father—that he had arrived secretly and mysteriously at Brenchley—he had heard the singular tale of Ethelbert—imagined him to be closely connected with her history—and what he had heard led him still more firmly to believe that Violet was of high family, removed through some interested motives, which, of course, as yet he could not fathom, though he resolved to see what could be ascertained from Ethelbert, whom he determined to seek immediately he quitted the cottage. If his surmises proved correct, and he had no doubt on the point, there existed an insuperable barrier between him and Violet; family blood was kept immeasurably distinct; the silk mitten was no companion for the coarse hand of a peasant—he was but a peasant—a free one, it is true, but still a peasant, and as such, no fitting mate for one of gentle blood. Even though the only bonds which should unite two such hearts were such as love alone should forge, yet custom held the question in a different light, and he loved her too well to give her cause ever to feel the pain of reflecting she had compromised her family honour by allying herself with one who could boast of no escutcheon. He was very proud; but although it might be inferred that pride here interfered, it was not the case; he did not anticipate any contumely *he* might receive—it was what she might have to endure if ever she was restored to her family, of which there was much probability, in not considering, that although fellow creatures, moulded by the same Almighty hand, equally capable of feeling the same impressions, liable alike to the effects of good and evil, equally the victim of death and perishability of the frame, society had established a law which said a Baron's daughter is unapproachable by a peasant's son, had instituted a distinction he was not permitted to infringe.

This reason was one which had great weight with him; but the second weighed stronger with him, for it was the question of reciprocal affection. He loved her in the very truest sense of the word; it was no ebullition of passion—no imaginative, time-being possession of the faculties; it was pure, real, unsophisticated love, created almost in infancy, progressing from day to day, year to year, strengthening with his growth, until it formed a principle of his existence. He was not of a changeful nature; there was nothing evanescently light in his composition, and he would with more ease and recklessness have changed his faith, in which he was well and strongly grounded, than he would have turned from her to another; his love for her was of a nature that admitted of no change—one that would have clung to her in good and evil undeviatingly, and had been as yet the groundwork of every action he performed; but although he entertained this feeling for her, his doubts, lately raised, were not inconsiderable, whether she possessed an affection to the same extent for him. He had sense enough to understand that she might have been brought up with him on the same terms as they had been, and yet only possess for him the love a sister might bear an affectionate brother, without knowing how far the feeling extended, until circumstances threw her into the society of one who raised the passion her foster-brother had failed in creating.

To a certain degree, he believed this to be the case with Violet; Sir Walter Manny being the one who had created the love he would have given all to have inspired. There was a doubt upon this conceit, but he feared it was a slight one; it was too possible to be improbable; if it were true, he did not attribute it to any changefulness of character in Violet, but rather to an absence of the merit in him which shone so conspicuously in Sir Walter; and if untrue, then there was still the likelihood that one might yet come who

would stand in the position which Wat believed Sir Walter Manny now to have obtained. It was not so much a doubt of himself which induced him to believe that she could not love him to the degree he hoped, but that she told him, with an evident feeling of pain, that she loved him, *but*—oh how that word seared him!—as a brother. There was the limit, the furthest point—the love created by gratefulness, which went as far as gratitude dictated, and nothing beyond. Then, with two such powerful reasons actuating him, why should he stay and drag on—waste—a life here, when he might mix in stirring scenes, rob his disappointment of much of its agony, by the excitement of actions which left little or no time for thought? Then, too, arose his ambition—the hope that his future deeds might show Violet it was no shame to have been idolised by such a heart as his; that he, too, could be a Sir Walter Manny in his deeds, and the same busy tongues which spread from ear to ear the fame of the Hainaulter should also wag in praise of the Englishman, Wat Tyler. His heart glowed with the thought, and for the moment he was half reconciled to his departure; but then again came the point of parting and the question he had set himself down to consider, and with it the sinking of the heart, the depression of spirits, that seemed to tell him that when he parted from Violet it would be for ever.

He tried to shake it off, and reason with himself coolly. He could see how easy it would be to part with her and his parents, by saying he was only going to London to induce Michael to return, and so bid them farewell with a comparative indifference, created by the expectation of his speedy return; but it was a strong question whether he could so far command his own feelings as to successfully go through with this politic resolve. He almost doubted it; and, in spite of his endeavours to the contrary, excuses would arise influencing him to leave the farewell—the last farewell—painful as it might be, until he really departed.

He had much, very much, to accomplish before he left; it was an utter impossibility to get it half done before nightfall, and he could not delay his departure until the morrow, for there was no excuse he could make which would enable him to manage it without creating a suspicion of his real intention. He wished, too, to see the stranger respecting Violet; he believed, with good grounds for so thinking, that he would be one who would supply his place in guarding her welfare while he was away, with almost as much tender solicitude as he had himself ever evinced. He was not certain he should meet with him, and if he did, he might be so long detained as to interfere with such arrangements as he would find it necessary to make, and thus be a principal cause of preventing him putting his intention into effect. At this period of his meditations, they were interrupted by the entrance of Violet, who came to him with tears in her eyes, saying—

"I fear poor Flora is very ill; she has taken Michael's abrupt departure very much to heart; she weeps most bitterly, and will not be consoled."

"I am sorry to hear it," replied Wat; "but the anguish she feels is scarcely undeserved; she has many times wrung poor Michael's heart until he could scarcely endure it—she has to-day. I know the pain she now endures surpasses by little, if any, that which I am well assured he is now suffering; it will be a lesson for her which I trust she will not lightly forget; hearts are not made to be sported with at the caprice of any one who has had the power of obtaining an influence over them. Flora has trifled with Michael's most unwarrantably, until she has snapped the tie which made it hers, and now, I fear, she has discovered that in separating his she will break her own."

"Poor girl," said Violet, compassionately; "do not speak of her harshly, she suffers enough; she feels the consequences of her own thoughtlessness most deeply; she is in a burning fever. I have now left her in—I can hardly say whether it is a sleep or a swoon; her face is flushed, her hands burn like living brands, and before she sank into this apathetic state, she looked and spoke as if her mind was wandering. Pray Heaven it may not be, but I am almost afraid that when she awakes she will neither be refreshed nor in her right mind."

"You surprise me, Violet. I believed that she loved him, but not to this extent. How could she have acted so foolishly, loving him thus?"

"I can only surmise," replied Violet, with a faint smile, "that she did not, like most females, see the policy of letting him know the amount of her affection for him, fearing that if she had, knowing he possessed her heart, he would grow indifferent."

"That notion is surely a very mistaken one, dear Violet," said Wat, taking her hand. "If a man *really* loves a woman, such a knowledge would gladden him and strengthen his love; for he would know that he had more reason than ever to be choice and tender of her, to do nothing which should in any manner wound her feelings, to cherish and foster her; for he would have on his heart the certainty that his indifference or unkindness would implant a wound which no time would ever heal. To know that we are beloved by those we love seems to me in no way calculated to excite indifference. I cannot see the unexceptionable truth in the doctrine that possession produces satiety; it may in things for which we have a passion without esteem, but certainly not where we regard the object of our desire with love founded on esteem. I do not call that love which is the affection of a season—which is fond until the fondness is reciprocated, and when that is obtained grows apathetic. Love is not a hunt, where the pleasure ceases when the chase is over. If such has been Flora's idea, it is a rock upon which she has split. Did she measure Michael's love by such a standard, it was not worth the possession; and her means of testing its strength were the worst, the most painful, and most hazardous she could display. Granting such freedoms, though comparatively innocent, to a stranger, for whom she cared not, in the very face of him who loved her—whom she, it appears, devotedly loves—was not the way to strengthen his affection, or render her position in his heart most secure, and in fact has produced effects the most lamentable. I sincerely hope that both her and Michael will again be restored to each other as happily as they can both wish, and that she will no longer hold the mistaken opinion that a confession of love to one who truly loves begets indifference; but on the contrary, in having good reason to believe she is beloved, she will not withhold from him the acknowledgment, even if she make it upon her bended knees, rather than she should endanger his and her own peace of mind for ever by the exercise of a line of conduct which is highly selfish and can never be truly successful. Do you not think me in the right, Violet?"

There was a great deal of meaning in the look which Violet bestowed upon him as he asked the question, and then she dropped her eyes gently and said—

"There is much truth in what you have said, but you would find great difficulty in persuading folks as much. The reason I assigned is the received opinion

among females especially; and I believe that they would look upon your view of the case as one too dangerous by far to follow, though perhaps the more natural and the more pleasing."

"I suppose it is in that as in all things; every one prefers going to heaven their own way, it is said, and every one does the same with love."

"Imagining it, I presume, the most right and the best."

"I should hardly believe poor Flora will have that opinion of the system she has pursued."

"I am afraid not. Poor girl! it is a bitter trial for her to believe she has broken the heart of him she really loved—caused him to quit his birth-place—and throw away his life in the frightful wars abroad."

A change passed over Wat's features as Violet uttered this speech earnestly. He found that it would require all his caution and management in his departure to make Violet believe, after what had transpired between them, that she had not fallen into the same error as Flora had so unfortunately done. He, however, conquered his momentary confusion without Violet's observing it, and replied—

"As his act arises only through the thoughtless levity she displayed, and the indifferent cheapness in which she appeared to hold him, preferring the attention of any stranger to his—and she possesses, it appears, most sensitive feelings—she must necessarily feel the event very much, for there is none to blame but herself."

"But I fear Michael was too hasty."

"I scarcely think so. Had he not taken some decisive step of this nature, they would have proceeded in the same manner, and it would probably have ended in her ruin and his destruction. If I should be successful in persuading him to return, you will see that she will be cured of flirtation, and he will be better able to maintain that independence which a man should preserve in his intercourse with females, and which they are most ready to perceive, to acknowledge, and respect."

"I hope it will be as you surmise. You will start to night. You will not be long away?"

"No longer than occasion demands."

"Do not, for Flora's sake. Explain forcibly to Michael her situation, and impress upon his mind that upon his forgiveness and return depends her reason, perhaps her life. Urge this strongly upon him; for, indeed, Wat, I do not exaggerate in saying such is my firm belief."

"I sincerely regret to hear it. I am mistaken in Michael if, when he learns her danger, he will need much pressing to return. But—I should be sorry to throw obstacles in the way—if he has positively entered the army there may be much difficulty in procuring his release."

"Then, for the Holy Virgin's sake, Wat, be as speedy as you can in overtaking him before such an unfortunate event can have occurred."

"I will lose no time—I will quit now to make a few arrangements, and before the sun is behind the hills I will be with you to bid you farewell."

"Take every precaution for safety while on your way, dear Wat, and let your return be as swift as success in your mission can make it, for the sake of the poor sufferer above, and for mine."

"For thy sake, Violet, there is nothing I would not do; and in this case I will spare neither breath nor ability to make my return as speedy and as successful as you can both desire. Farewell for the present; I will see thee again before sundown."

"Farewell! Heaven speed thee in all things, my kind friend," exclaimed Violet, pressing his hands; he kissed hers and departed. As he went along quickly, he muttered—

"I wish she had said 'dear Wat,' instead of 'kind friend;' friend is all very well—friend is well with a friend, but with Violet it is next to nothing. I wish she had said 'dear Wat.'"

He continued his progress towards his home, evidently very much dissatisfied with the phrase Violet had used, and his feelings inducing him to increase his speed considerably, until he found that he was not so strong as usual, that the loss of blood on the previous night had diminished his capabilities for running, and he was compelled to stop and then walk rather slowly along. He had not proceeded far at this change of pace, when he encountered Leowulf accoutred for some expedition.

"How now, Wat Tyler!" cried the bold smith. "Why I was told thou wert on a sick bed, that one of the black-garbed rascals set upon thee while fighting with one of his fellows in villany, and wounded thee sorely."

"Whoever told thee so said too much. I received a wound only in the fleshy part of my arm. I lost rather more blood than my strength could well bear, but not enough to keep me moping upon a pallet. I confess to a little weakness, but otherwise am well enough."

"Ha! to be sure, it is nothing bad—a mere nothing. You must think of it as such. You must expect these sort of scratches in skirmishes like unto that last night, lad."

"Skirmishes! Call you last night's work a skirmish?"

"Very little else! Nothing more than a foraging party would have to perform in encountering the piquet of an enemy. Ho! ho! You never saw a battle, a real battle, between two armies. Ho! ho! that is the work; there you have fighting and slashing in real earnest. The enemy won't be cut down like the dogs last night. They know the use of their weapons better. It is work that makes your blood boil and dance in your veins, and your heart leap about madly. It is no sport for babies. Ho! ho! A dashing charge will make your strongest men at times wax pale, as it comes sweeping on. Ho! ho! Last night a battle! Ho! ho!"

"I may live to see one; then I shall think of your words. Whither art thou bound, thus armed and accoutred?"

"To the wood."

"Indeed! for what?"

"What should I seek there but that grim-muzzled rogue of the bloody hand, who escaped me last night? He is still in the wood, and our mysterious friend with him, hunting him out, as you would a wolf from a lair. If he has not yet come across him, I may; and if I do, I will try if this morning shall not see me finish what I last night so well begun."

"I see you have recovered your sword, of which I heard thee say thou hadst been robbed."

"Ay, my bonny sword! thanks to Mark Grayling, it is mine again. I feel like another being when I have this stout friend in my possession, as if nothing on earth could successfully oppose me. Ho, ho! Grif shall find that there is no escaping this, though there was the axe."

"If you should encounter the stranger, will you tell him I wish to speak with him upon matters of importance, and will be with him two hours hence at the spot where we last met?"

"That will I, if I fall in with him;—but wilt thou not accompany me?"

"I cannot, for I have some affairs at home to arrange."

"As you will. If I should see our mysterious friend, I will deliver thy message."

"I thank you! Farewell! Success attend thy enterprise."

"I have no doubt of it, if I meet the evil-doing rogue. Farewell!"

Wat shook Leowulf's extended hand, and proceeded homeward, while the smith continued his way to the wood. Though unaccustomed to engage in such affairs as the one he had now undertaken, he pursued his task with no small ability and ingenuity: he avoided the places in which Grif was not likely to be concealed, and only searched such as presented the appearance of secreting the redoubtable ruffian. In pursuing this plan, he entered the copse which Grif, with the stranger at his heels, had some hours quitted, and encountered, lying at the foot of an old oak tree, the unfortunate Martin du Bois, who had been restored to life through having his wound hurriedly dressed by Grif. He had crawled a short distance from the spot on which he had been left; and when Leowulf came up, was lying moaning, helpless, and all but lifeless. The smith started on seeing his extended frame, and bending over him, raised him partly up, and discovered the wound upon his breast. He had never before seen Martin, therefore knew him not; and perceiving by the material of his dress that he was no peasant, he at once concluded that Martin was a cavalier whom Grif had met, robbed, and maltreated thus.

"Ho, ho!" he exclaimed, "he can't keep his 'bloody hand' still, nor do I expect he will until somebody quiets him for ever—and that, I hope, will be my lot. Ho, ho! how I long to meet him. By my roaring forge! I think I would give my bonny sword to any one who would throw me in his path; that is, I would give it after I slew the rascal—not before. Ho, ho! it quits not my possession until he is dead. I wonder who this dying man is? A victim of Grif's, I would stake my right hand! What's to be done with him? He breathes! he is alive! It won't do to leave him here. I wonder if he has strength to speak? I'll try. Hollo! friend, how came you in this sad condition, eh? Can you hear me? Ah! he nods. Who has done this violence on you? Was it Grif of the Bloody Hand? By Heaven, he nods. It was him; I thought so. What an immeasurable blood-thirsty hound he is. By the mass! one would have thought last night's work would have softened him a trifle; but no, here he is on his sanguinary track again. What shall I do with this poor fellow? It will be rather annoying to have to quit the pursuit, and lead him to the village. Grif may escape in my absence, and that I would not have happen for the best piece of forged metal in existence—except my bonny blade. But then it would disgrace my Christian duty, were I to leave this poor fellow here to die—to be perhaps torn to pieces, and devoured by some ravenous wolf. No, I cannot do that. It would be better the fiend Grif should escape, than that should take place! Um! there's no alternative, so I will make as short work of it as I can. Let me put him on his feet; perhaps he can walk. Ha! a good thought; if I cut him a stout staff, he may be able with its aid to reach the village without my being obliged to bear him company. We will see. Ho! sir cavalier, hast thou strength to walk? Ha, ha! Why, that is well; he nods his head. Dost thou know thy way to Brenchley from here? Thou dost; I see by thy nod. If I cut thee a staff, thou canst walk thither unaided? He nods again. I wish he'd speak. But I suppose he is too faint. Now, do thou lean against that tree, while I furnish thee from yon sapling a staff that shall help thee nobly."

He placed Martin against the oak as he said this, and drawing from his belt a long-bladed knife, he proceeded to cut down a young branch, and fashion it into a quarter-staff, which, as soon as he had completed, he presented to Martin, saying—

"There, friend, grasp that; fear not, 'twill bear unbendingly thrice thy weight; lean well on it; go thy way slowly and steadily, there is nothing to stop or hurt thee; be not alarmed that thou shouldst again meet with Grif of the Bloody Hand, it will be my especial care to prevent his coming near thee, and there is nothing else between this and Brenchley to do thee ill. Away with thee. When thou hast cleared the wood, the first cottage you come to belongs to Halbert Evesham; knock, and ask boldly for shelter and succour, it is sure to be granted thee; he is a saint of charity; he refuses it to none, and when he sees thy miserable condition, will render thee every aid and attention thy state requires. Farewell, friend; cheer up, help is at hand—courage, courage—you will do it bravely yet. Here, let me lead thee forth; so. By the Holy Virgin! I doubt if he heard a word I said. How wretchedly ghastly he looks."

Leowulf's conclusion, though he otherwise desired it, was the correct one. Martin du Bois had not heard a word he said; he was in a state of utter unconsciousness; it might be just said he was not in a swoon, and that was all; he lolled his head from side to side slowly and heavily, his eyelids pressed down upon his glazed eyes, which appeared almost sightless; his breath came in short pants from his half-opened mouth, and his whole frame appeared powerless; he remained where Leowulf had placed him, against the tree, until he placed the staff into his hand, around which he closed his fingers as though he had not an atom of strength to retain it there; he suffered himself to be led forth, and when Leowulf quitted his hold of him, leaving him to walk by himself, he stood where he had been left, swaying too and fro, as if he would each moment lose his balance and fall. Leowulf heaved a long sigh, and muttered—

"Grif must have the chance of escape. I cannot let this poor devil remain thus. I must myself lead him to the village, and then get back with what speed I can. Come on, friend—the Holy Rood! how cold his hand is. By St. Charity, I must hasten with him if I wish to keep life in him. Now then, friend, cheer up, you will soon get well beneath the care of Halbert Evesham; my life on't you will not long be so feeble as thou art now; keep up thy spirits; gently—very well—again—that's it. Oh, you will soon be well!"

Thus alternately cheering and leading, Leowulf guided Martin from the copse towards Brenchley. He was determined to do what he considered his duty; but he wished in his heart any one but himself had fallen in with the wounded man, because he feared it was losing him the opportunity of doing the deed he so much coveted accomplishing; ever and anon, as the thought crossed him, he hurried along with a speed, considering Martin's condition, hardly consistent with prudence, until a faint moan reminded him that it was no robust fellow he was leading, and he would again drop into the snail-like pace which best accorded with Martin's state.

As he neared the borders of the wood, he saw a man advancing towards him; when he drew closer, Leowulf set up a shout—

"Ah!" he cried, "what, Canute! my bold, iron-armed Canute! come hither. Ho! ho! thou'rt come

to my wish. My jolly Canute! henceforth I'll call thee King Canute, thou friend in need."

This harangue was addressed to the comer, whom the smith recognised to be his principal assistant at the forge. He at once resolved to consign Martin to his care, and once more return in search of Grif, with the intention of making up by diligence for lost time.

"We are well met, good Master Leowulf. Wert thou looking for me?"

"Aye marry, for any one who would rid me of my present occupation."

"What ails him thou'rt leading?"

"He has been wounded, and, I doubt not, left for dead by our acquaintance, Grif of the Bloody Hand, for whom I am impatiently on the search. I fell in with this cavalier, nearly senseless, at the foot of a tree, and as I could not leave him there to perish, I gave up my pursuit of Grif to bring him to Brenchley; I could not well do both, though I had much rather done the former. However, you can take him off my hands, and lead him to Halbert Evesham's, that is the nearest dwelling, and they will afford him ready help there."

"But if I mistake not," said Canute, "it is already a sick house. Evesham was wounded, so it is reported, almost to death, the same night Violet was borne away, and he is now in bed; and I have just heard that Flora, the laughing daughter of Botolph, has been taken suddenly and dangerously ill there."

"I remember that Halbert Evesham is on a sick bed—but I've not heard about Flora, though not long since I met young Wat Tyler, who was sure to have known if such an event had occurred, but he said nothing respecting it."

"Perhaps it did not take place until after he had left there. I was told of it by one of Halbert's people, whom I met on my way hither, who had been despatched to summon her mother."

"Ah! then it will not do to take him there—stay, I have it—take him to Wat Tyler's home; they are charitable enough there in all conscience, and will look kindly to his hurts. I have no one at my place, you know; beside, Martin the Tyler's is much nearer here. Change places with me; be very gentle with him, for he is very weak."

"Exhausted, I suppose, from loss of blood."

"I suppose so. Off with you; I have not a moment to lose. Perhaps while I am standing parleying with you, Grif has made his escape good."

"I thought that stranger who fought last night with us, was after him."

"So he is, I believe; but I should opine it would be no very impossible matter to elude his vigilance."

"Why, I don't think you can be much sharper-sighted than him, for it is my opinion and that of many others, that he is a spirit come on earth on purpose to hunt down the Bloody Hand."

"All who are of your opinion are fools, my good Canute. Spirits may come on earth—it would not become me as a good Christian to say they do not—but to the best of my belief not in that fashion."

"I thought they might come in any fashion that suited them."

"Think what you please; this stranger is no spirit, though with that flambeauing snake upon his helmet he did not, I confess, look unlike one; but as I know how that is done, it goes for nothing, and in the present chase, he may be sharper-sighted than I; but still with such a range as this forest, no doubt every foot of it well known to him, Grif will have good chances of getting clear away; but with two on his track he may not be so fortunate. Besides, I have something in my breast, a sort of presentiment that I shall meet with him, and rid the world of the villain; most earnestly I hope I may; if I meet with him, it shall go hard but I do. Farewell!"

"Stop, good master, I was seeking thee when I entered the wood."

"Seeking me! what's i' the wind now?"

"There are some orders for swords, breastpieces, helms, and other steel gear, just left at the forge; they are wanted in eight days. It will be impossible to get them done with so few hands as we have, and they are required without fail. I would give no answer until I saw you, and I knew not how long you might be away, so I came to try and find you."

"Who are they for?"

"The Earl of Tonbridge. There is stirring news from abroad; King Edward is fitting out an expedition, and the Earl's son is to join it. He will take a number of followers with him, and most of the armour and weapons are for them. We cannot do them unless you return with me."

"Then we cannot do them, for I shall most certainly not return with you."

"The Earl will pay well."

"I care not. I tell thee, Canute, that were the King of England and the Holy Pope to kneel on each side of me, requesting me to forego my present purpose, I would not. Tell the Earl's steward, for I suppose it is he who bears the order, what can be done in the time shall be, and the remainder shall be finished as soon after as may be done conveniently; if he like not my reply, bid him seek another smith. You have my answer—away! Lead this wounded cavalier carefully to Martin Tyler, and, if God speed me, by nightfall I will be in Brenchley with the head of Grif of the Bloody Hand. Farewell, King Canute."

"Farewell, good master; God speed thee!"

"Amen!" cried Leowulf, watching for a minute Canute bearing Martin away tenderly, and then he again plunged into the wood. This time he took a different direction, and using his best speed he scrutinised every place he passed, almost expecting to see the form of Grif cowering beneath some brushwood, with fierce glaring eyes, ready, like some huge wolf, to spring out upon a passing, defenceless traveller; but his vigilant search was not repaid by discovering the wretch he sought; he, however, stumbled upon the cave which had long served as the retreat for the formidable band. As he reached the mouth, he looked into it, and guessed for what purpose it had been employed, and his heart leaped within him as he thought and hoped Grif might be concealed there. He listened attentively to see if he could hear whether his hope would be realised, and plainly heard the sound of a retiring footstep; it retreated slowly and stealthily, and then became silent. Was this Grif? he asked himself. He had every reason to believe it was; he chuckled with delight, believing he had him now in his power, and determined not to let him easily get out of it. He knew not the extent of the cave, and felt that he must be very cautious in entering it after the Bloody Hand, in order that while he was groping about for him, as it was verging on darkness in the inside, he might not rush past him and escape. In considering the best means of accomplishing this, the thought crossed him of enticing Grif out by stratagem. He did not think he had been seen, and Grif, if Grif it was, might take him for a member of his late band, until they confronted each other, and after that had taken place, Leowulf did not intend the mistake to continue. He, therefore, keeping his person hidden by a jutting corner of the cave, called out in a low, stealthy voice—

"Grif, Grif, art thou there?"

But Grif nor any one else made any reply; he awaited an answer for some little time, but the silence was kept unbroken. He began again—

"Grif," he called in a whisper, "if thou art there come forth, or let me know that it is thou who art hiding in the cave. I have escaped the fray of last night, and need thy aid and counsel. Grif, answer me; I am one of thy band; I am wounded and helpless."

But the wolf was not to be drawn from his lair—the stratagem did not succeed; Leowulf waited in vain for a response; he muttered a curse upon his shrewdness, and prepared to enter. His long two-handed sword was grasped and laid upon his shoulder ready for instant use, and everything which forethought could suggest to assist and command success, was levied. He made one more attempt to bring his statagem to bear:

"If it is thee, Grif," he cried, in the same tone of voice he had before used, "thou wilt not be the huge coward to remain nestled like a wolf in a covert, when one of thy followers seek thy aid—one who has hazarded all for thee; thou wilt not be the dog—the abject, frightened hound, to remain."

There was every reason to believe that he would, for Leowulf's words had no effect; there was not a sound to indicate the existence of anything living beside himself, and after listening for some little time without avail, the smith's patience got the better of him. He roared out in a passionate and very loud voice—

"Come out, you cowardly, sneaking cur, come out. This is I, Leowulf, who last night beat thee on to thy knees; who made thee quail and quiver with fright. Come forth, thou mountain of villany, with a mouse's courage. Ho! ho! there's a pulse in the hilt of my bonny blade, it throbs and heaves; it knows its work is at hand. Come forth, scoundrel, or if I come to thee, I'll slit thy nose and ears dog-wise. What! thou wilt not come forth; then I will show thee no quarter. Ho! my bonny blade, thy time has come."

Uttering the last exclamation with a gleeful laugh, Leowulf darkened the mouth of the cave with his form, and advanced cautiously into it; both his hands grasped his sword's hilt, that he might give a blow on the instant it was required; he went on step by step slowly, glancing rapidly round him, to prevent any one passing unobserved, or indeed any movement escaping him; he listened, too, as he proceeded, with the greatest intentness, to enable him to hear any retreating footstep, that he might, the moment the sound fell upon his ear, make towards it, and attack whoever had created it; yet, however, nothing arose to satisfy him that the footsteps he had heard on his first approach were real or imaginary. He had made the circuit of nearly one half the cave, when he began to doubt whether his ears had been deceived, and he had wasted all this time for nothing; the thought made him pause and reflect upon the circumstances which had led him to believe he had heard them. While he was cogitating, he fancied he heard some one, not far from him, breathing; at first he fancied it was himself, and held his breath, bending his ears to catch the slightest sound, and then he was satisfied that he could hear a person within a few feet of him breathing. He hesitated for a moment what to do, and then suddenly came to a decision; he withdrew his left hand from his sword, stretched it forward, and then bounded with an impetuous dash in the direction in which the breathing came. His hand came in violent contact with a man's chin, but his legs caught against some protruding body, and he was hurled with the stranger with tremendous violence upon the ground; he was shaken, but not hurt, and acted upon the absorbing impulse, seized the person he had laid prostrate by the collar, gained his feet, pulled him up, and vowing instant death to him, if he offered to struggle to escape, he dragged him to the light. To his disappointment it was not Grif, but one of the band of devils—a fellow whose countenance scarcely justified the situation in which he had lived, for it was rather simple than ferocious; he certainly exhibited more fear and irresolution than courage or determination. Leowulf looked sternly upon him as he trembled in his grasp, and in a gruff, harsh voice demanded—

"Who art thou?"

"Ulph, a cowherd."

"And what did'st thou in the cave—art thou one of Grif's band?"

"Yes; I was left in the cave last night to watch while the rest of the band went on an expedition from which they have not yet returned."

"And never will."

"The Lord be praised!"

"What?"

"I mean if they do return, the Lord be praised!"

"Um! Why were you in particular left behind last night?"

"Because—because—"

"No prevarication; tell the truth, as you value your life."

"I will: because I am not one of the fighting men."

"Ho! ho! You like the plunder, without the danger of pillaging. How came you to enter the band, since you are so peaceably inclined?"

"I did not *enter* it, I was *made* a member of it by compulsion; I had no natural taste for it."

"What mean you?"

"Are you a friend of Grif of the Bloody Hand?"

"Why do you ask the question?"

"Because my explanation depends upon it. I do not think thou art, if I judge by thy conduct, and it would comfort me mightily if I knew the truth."

"Well, I am his bitterest foe."

"May I believe you?"

"Foh! Dost thou think I would trouble myself to lie to such a thing as thou?"

"You gave two different styles of invitation for Grif to come out, when you fancied he was in here. Which am I to believe?"

"The latter. I am seeking him now to destroy the villain."

"You don't know how glad I am to hear you say so."

"Why should'st thou be glad?"

"Because there is nothing in the world I regard with such horror and detestation as I do him."

"You speak in riddles. How is it you were one of the band, possessing such feelings?"

"Because I could not help myself. I was years ago a cowherd."

"And a coward now—ho! ho!"

"Well, I acknowledge I do not pride myself upon my bravery, but that's my affair. I was a cowherd in the service of the Earl of Berkeley, and Grif having discovered that I knew some secrets respecting a nobleman and a lady, and her husband, whose name is Evesham——"

"What, do you mean Halbert Evesham, of Brenchley?"

"Of Brenchley. No. He I mean was steward to Sir John Maltravers. Is there any one of the name of Evesham in Brenchley?"

"Yes, an oldish man and a foster-daughter, who is

very handsome; they came to our village very mysteriously, nobody knows who they are, or where they came from."

"Let me see—about thirteen or fourteen years."

"That must be about the time. They may be the same about whom I know some strange things. Grif

"It would be singular if it should be *them*," muttered Ulph; "how long have they been in the village?"

found out that I did, and made me join his band or be knifed. I preferred the former, and have lived with him—I cannot say comfortably—ever since."

"How long is that?"

"I have been in this forest only two years, but with him twelve; sometimes we served in the army when there was plenty of plunder, at others in the Forest of Dean; but he was offered the command of this band two years ago, which he accepted, and I came with him, and have been compelled to stop. If you could conveniently take me with you, I should take it as a very high favour. I have no desire to remain here any longer, I can assure you. I should have left before, if I dared, but I dared not. I don't want to see any of the band again. I do not look upon them as friends; and, to tell the truth, I hate their acquaintance."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Leowulf, "You will not have the opportunity of seeing them, three parts of them are dead and buried, and the remainder, except Grif, are shipped off to the wars. They last night sought to attack and burn our village, but they were defeated —failed most deadly. I am after Grif now, and before morning he will be, so please the heavenly powers, no longer among the living."

"A just fate," said Ulph, with a slight shudder. "He is a terrible monster."

"Terrible only to such as thee. Ho! ho! I long to meet him. Dost thou know any of his hiding-places?"

"No; he never used to hide; the band did all that sort of work."

"No matter, I shall pounce on him, I doubt not. Let me see; your secrets may be of importance, so you must be a prisoner for a time."

"I will go anywhere you please, and tell all I know to any one you may point out. I shall be too glad to get away from this horrid den."

"Ah! but you cannot leave it just yet."

"Why not?"

"Not until my work is done. You might be an ally for me, but you might for my enemy. I like to make sure. I must fasten you up here."

"I pray you do not. I will go anywhere you direct me, as truly and as correctly as if you were with me. You try me."

"No, thank you. Come, make no resistance, or you will suffer for it; and waste no words in trying to dissuade me from my purpose, because they will be uttered in vain. When I see a thing is for the best, I do it, and am not to be turned aside by trifles; therefore submit quietly."

"Anything you please; only don't bind me so hard as to hurt me, and don't forget to come for me. I have a great objection to starving anywhere, more particularly here."

"Ho! ho! Be not much alarmed. I shall not forget you. Your secrets render your life worth preserving, if they are worth having."

"That I can assure you they are; for I know more than Grif knows, and much that he does know is gathered from me, and I misled him on many points."

"Very well! If you have spoken the truth, you will shortly be better off than you have ever been; if not, you will swing into the other world."

"I can prove all I say, that's one comfort. I am afraid you are fastening me too tight, the thong cuts my arms—rather."

"There, you will do. I don't think thou canst undo thy bonds thyself easily; so farewell for a time."

"I feel very tight; you could not loosen them a little, could you?"

"No."

"Oh! you will come back as soon as you can?"

"I will not be away longer than I can help."

"Many thanks. I do not feel exactly easy or comfortable now; I may by-and-bye, I hope."

"Most like you may. Keep yourself quiet until I return, and then I will see what can be done for you. Farewell."

So saying, Leowulf shouldered his sword, and marched out of the copse, leaving the *ci-devant* devil bound firmly to a piece of rock. When once more in the forest, the smith knew not which way to turn, or to what part to direct his steps that he might alight upon any spot likely to conceal Grif. After speculating upon the subject for a short time, he decided to make a circuit of the cave, believing that the chase was somewhere in the vicinity; and with a business-like air he commenced his task, intending to search round the back at the first half, and if he failed, then to proceed and complete the circuit round the front. He beat the bushes and thickets as he advanced, but without success. Once he gave chase to a wolf, believing it to be Grif, for he could not get sight of it, as it fled among the thick underwood; but as soon as it flew through an opening, and he perceived it was not *the* wolf he was after, he gave up the pursuit and returned to his original plan.

In his way he came in sight of the amphitheatre of chalk, already mentioned, and happening mechanically to cast his eyes upwards, he saw two figures seated on the brow. At first he thought himself deceived—rubbed his eyes, and looked again. He was very long-sighted, and tried to make out who they were, but in vain; they were at too great a height and distance altogether for him to distinctly trace in garb or form a resemblance to any one he knew. He had a strange fancy, which strongly took possession of him, that the two were Grif of the Bloody Hand and the stranger, only that they were seated up there in such an amicable manner that he could not reconcile it with the deadly enmity they bore each other. If they were not those he supposed them to be, he could not imagine whom they were; and at last thought he should save time if he went up the hill, the way to which he knew, and satisfy himself. Just as he was about executing his intention, he observed one rise up and move slowly along, then stop. The other one followed his example, and the first went on. Then he observed the second dart on the first, and then a terrible struggle took place on the verge of that tremendous cliff. His blood ran cold as he saw them sway to and fro, twist round and round, each time getting nearer to the edge, until he wondered how it was they did not both fall over and be dashed to pieces.

Now he saw one grasp at a tree growing close to the edge, and then hurled over the cliff's side, but suddenly brought up by the help of a branch which he had grasped. He witnessed the struggles, contortions, and desperate frantic exertions which the suspended wretch made, and he felt a sickness over his frame, as he knew the dreadful fate awaiting him, who, in the agony of a frightful despair, was clinging to the slight branch which kept him from a death the smith shuddered to think of. He fancied—perhaps it was not fancy—he could hear his shrill screams for mercy, and would have given worlds to have been at his side to assist him; but there was not time. And even, as he thought that, he saw the conqueror throw himself at the foot of the tree with uplifted arm, purposing to complete the work he so terribly commenced, and ere his arm could descend, the branch snapped—separated itself from its parent stem—and down came the body of the wretched man with frightful velocity, turning over in its descent, and then before it had reached the base it was hidden from his sight by trees

and portions of the cliff. He uttered a groan of horror at the frightful sight, and cast his eyes upwards upon him who had accomplished this tremendous revenge. He saw him standing with upraised hands in the attitude of thankfulness to Him who had granted him the victory. The next instant he disappeared.

As soon as Leowulf recovered from the sensation of horror which this scene had produced, his first impulse was to make to the spot where the body had fallen, and see whether he could render any assistance, and at the same time to discover who the unfortunate was; if his surmises were correct respecting it being either Grif or the stranger. He shuddered as he feared the stranger might be the victim; and, if he was, he believed he should have time, after ascertaining it, to stop Grif before he could quit the cliff. He knew there was but one outlet, and he believed he should have time, if he used good speed, to see the body, and be at the mouth of the lane leading to the hill before the villain could get quit of it! He accordingly darted forward at a swift pace, and after winding among many trees, through a deep hollow, a sort of wild glen, where he had many difficulties to surmount, being compelled to clamber over many masses of rock, straggling trees, leap parts where a stream made pools and waterfalls, as it wound its course among the irregular masses lying about in inextricable confusion, at length he reached the base of the cliff, and looking over a mass of huge lumps clustered together, he saw the ill-fated body lying senseless.

He leaped over the barrier and stood over the man. It was Grif of the Bloody Hand!

He gave a sigh of relief, and wiped the thick perspiration from his brow. He was glad to find it was no other. The death was awful, but deserved; and the shuddering dread which had possessed him, fearing it might have been one who had not merited the dreadful fate, passed away. It was with a feeling approaching satisfaction that he now gazed upon the lifeless form of Grif, as it lay wedged among several large blocks of chalk—every limb apparently broken, and presenting altogether a spectacle too horrible to describe.

"Justice has overtaken thee at last, thou unparelleled monster!" soliloquised Leowulf; "and thy death, though terrible, is no worse than thy crimes deserve. Ho, ho! I don't know but it was better thou should'st perish in this miserable manner than have fallen by my bonny five foot of fire-proof steel; though I do confess I should vastly have liked to have compassed thy death—but it was not to be; the stranger was before me—it must have been him who did this; no one else, I do believe, would have hit upon the idea of hunting him there, and then hurling him over. Ho, ho! the wretched brute must have suffered horribly in his feelings while he hung there; that was punishment here—what will he have when they get him below? Ho, ho! I would not be in his skin, not to be made emperor of the world. It will be hot work for him. There can't be any mistaking that this stranger is a lucky fellow. Ha! it's strange if Canute should be right, and he be a spirit."

At this moment he was tremendously startled by hearing a scornful laugh behind him. He turned hastily round, and saw the stranger standing a short distance from him, with his arms folded, regarding him as if he were scrutinizing his actions and enjoying his astonishment.

"The stranger!" cried Leowulf, as if a spectre had risen up before him.

"Thy friend. A stranger no longer," replied Ethelbert.

"How came you here? Did you fling Grif off the cliff, overhead?"

"I did accomplish the fate he has met with, and came here by a bye-path, down the cliff's side—known, I believe, only to myself."

"You got here wondrously quick," observed Leowulf, eyeing him with suspicion.

"Not so quick as a spirit could have done. The distance is not great, and I hurried to put the wretch out of his misery, if his fall had not occasioned his death."

"Which it has done most effectually, whether you be a spirit or no."

"Dismiss all such idle superstitions from thy mind, good smith; the human mind contains always sufficient energy, if properly and unflinchingly exercised, to accomplish feats which appear impossible of realisation by any but supernatural powers. Be satisfied that what is done is entirely out of human means, before you imagine it the work of a spirit. What I have done any one might have accomplished, possessing like motives for revenge. Know me as no spirit, but as Ethelbert Evesham, the avenger of his own bitter wrongs."

"Evesham? What! are you any relative to Halbert Evesham, of our village?"

"We are connected."

"It's rather a singular coincidence: on my way hither I fell in with Grif's cave, and on searching it turned out a poor timid wretch, who said Grif had compelled him to join his band, because he possessed some secrets relating to a noble—a lady, her husband one Ethelbert Evesham, and a child."

"Ha! What more said he?"

"I scarce remember. Something that he knew more than Grif did, and all Grif knew was not correct, because he had misled him."

"A member of the band, you say?"

"Yes. One Ulph, formerly a cow-herd."

"I know him, the fool. I tried to persuade him to quit the band, and for which Grif shot at me, but missed me."

"Oh! then you were a member of the band?"

"Yes. I joined under the name of Mat Snake, thinking to work out my revenge the better. While with the villains, this poor wretch you speak of was hourly terrified at his situation, and in his heart, I believe, well disposed. I tried to instil courage enough into him to escape, and offered to escort him safely out of the wood. He agreed, and then, I suppose, in some panic-stricken moment, confessed his intended departure to Grif, and I was condemned to suffer death; fortunately, Grif fired at me when twilight was sinking into darkness, and I had time to drop before the bolt reached me. I crawled noiselessly away at the moment, and was soon out of reach."

"How long is this since?"

"Very recently—only three nights since."

"So lately?"

"Aye! I little dreamed that my revenge was so near being consummated. I am well revenged on one; I will be on the other, ere long. What has become of this Ulph?"

"I left him bound in the cave, with a promise, if he remained quiet, and had told me the truth respecting his secrets, it should be better for him."

"If what he knows is important, he shall not want a reward; but I must be sure he tells me nought but truth."

"He says he can prove everything."

"It is well. I will at once to him."

"Oh! I had nearly forgotten to tell you that young Wat Tyler wishes to see you upon matters of import-

ance, and will be at the spot where you last met in two hours from the time he saw me, which must be nearly two hours agone."

"I will to him first, and do you return back to the cave; unbind your prisoner, and bring him to me at Halbert Evesham's, where you will find me."

"Very well. What is to be done with this carrion?"

"Let it lie there and rot, or be food for birds of prey, wild beasts, or any foul reptile—I care not."

"That pool in which one of his feet is buried seems deep; shall I fling him in there?"

"Do as you please with him; my work with the ruffian has ended. I shall now away to Wat Tyler. I shall meet you anon at Halbert Evesham's."

"Very well."

Ethelbert turned and was gone in an instant. Leowulf looked after him for a moment, and then muttered——

"Well! he has a quick way of doing things. I am glad I know he is no spirit, for that has eased my mind a bit. I began to have my doubts, and I don't exactly like dealing with folks unearthly. Now for this mutilated wretch. By the Mass!" he cried, as he pulled Grif's body from the place where it was embedded, "there's not a whole bone in his body—he's crushed to a jelly. He's warm yet, but quite dead—quite—not a pulse anywhere. There, away with you!" he exclaimed, flinging the body into the pool, and having watched the waters close over the ghastly bleeding features, and the whole frame disappear, uttered a farewell to it: "Good bye, for ever, Grif of the Bloody Hand; our acquaintance was short, but quite long enough; may I never meet with another like thee!"

He then leaped over the masses of rock, wound through the glen, and in a thoughtful mood took his way to the cave.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I have words
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not catch them."

SHAKSPERE.

"O, unhappy tale!
* * * * *
Here tell me, if thou dar'st, my conscious soul,
What different sorrows did within thee roll?
What pangs, what fires, what racks, didst thou sustain?
What sad vicissitudes of smarting pain?"

PRIOR.

"Then speak again, not all thy former tale,
But this one word—whether thy tale be true?"

SHAKSPERE.

"O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung,
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.
In dewy damps my limbs were chill'd,
My blood with gentle horrors thrill'd;
My feeble pulse forgot to play—
I fainted, sunk, and died away."

AMBROSE PHILIPS.

WAT TYLER was at the place appointed when Ethelbert Evesham reached it; and he hailed his appearance with an expression of pleasure. He instantly changed his position, which was one of thoughtfulness, into that of gladsome greeting, and exclaimed—

"I feared thou wouldst not come. I have waited with much anxiety some time for thee."

"I but received thy message scarce half an hour since, and I instantly came hither. What are these matters of importance upon which you desire to speak with me?"

"I seek thy aid and counsel for one of whom thou hast spoken to me, in whom you have shown much interest; and also for myself. But first let me ask, have you encountered Grif of the Bloody Hand?"

"I have, and he is dead. You will hear the story, doubtless, from others, and will therefore spare me the recital."

"It is enough to know that he is dead; I care not how it was accomplished."

"You were about to speak of Violet Evesham."

"I was. Pardon any abruptness I may use, for my time is short; or any appearance of impertinent inquisitiveness, for the powerful anxiety I feel for Violet's welfare may induce me to step beyond the limits where curiosity should stay."

"Proceed!"

"When we first met, you told me more respecting Halbert Evesham than I had ever known, and gave me to understand that Violet was his child—"

"No—would she were the child of him whose story I told thee. Violet was placed by his side, and with her a letter from his beloved wife."

"I inferred from that, that Violet was his child."

"Did I not tell thee four years elapsed between the loss of his wife and the sudden appearance of the infant by his bedside?"

"True, I had forgotten that; however, it matters not; you possess a great knowledge of all the events which at that period transpired, and I fancy I am not far from the truth in believing that the story you told me was of yourself, not of Halbert; although I cannot reconcile her having always lived with him instead of you; you smile—I see I am not wrong."

"Suppose such should be the fact—what then?"

"You shall know anon. Permit me to ask why you singled me out to inform of the danger in which Violet stood when Martin du Bois was to have carried her off?"

"I did not single you out, you crossed my path; I guessed—indeed you told me, you were belonging to Brenchley. I had overheard the threatened danger to Violet, and was unable myself to interfere, because I might, in so doing, have sacrificed the point I most aimed at, one which I had so long and hardly laboured for, but I would have foregone that rather than her safety should have been compromised."

"Of course you knew that she dwelled in Brenchley before you saw me?"

"I did."

"And knew of our intimacy?"

"Not until you told me as much."

"Why did you ask me if I loved her?

"For the same reason that I told you the story; because it was to awaken all the interest you might feel for her in her favour. I have schooled myself, Wat, for years, to read people's characters and the thoughts which pass through their minds in their faces, and to aid my judgment by observing their smallest acts. I saw enough of you to induce me to place in you a trust which your behaviour has since proved I was justified in doing, and that my opinion of you was well founded. I needed, then, the aid of one who had much influence in the village; your looks, manner, all told me you were such an one. It was necessary to so far interest you that you should identify yourself with the person about to be injured, and in a degree, to make the quarrel yours; the result has proved I was correct."

"Then you did not ask me that question with any

other view than to save Violet, and aid you in working out your revenge?"

"Exactly."

"You had no motive influencing you to ascertain the relative position in which we stood to each other, in order that you might interfere with, or promote, whatever amount of affection existed between us?"

"None whatever. Why do you press the question thus earnestly?"

"Because—because—why should I disguise it—I love her—most devotedly, most adoringly; and this I confess to you, because I believe you know best whether I am in a position to ask her hand—whether I should seek to make her mine—or if she be so far above me in birth, that I should cast away all such hope for ever, utterly—utterly."

"This is a boy's romance of feeling," exclaimed Ethelbert, looking inquiringly at him.

"Romance of feeling!" cried Wat, almost in scorn. "You tell me you can read people's characters in their faces; look on mine," he added, throwing it proudly up. "Is there a line there a man should be ashamed to own? I know I am a boy in years, but is there one iota of mind, of character, of energy, of determination which stamps a man, that I want. I say not this boastfully; I am sure you will do me more justice than to suppose so; but I beg of you not to judge of me as a boy, because I lay my heart bare, when you have owned that my acts were those of a man. I love Violet most truly, whether man or boy, no less than you loved the lady who was so cruelly torn from you. Ah, you start! What made thee endure such agony at her loss? What made thee pass years of misery to be revenged on those who wronged thee? What kept thee to thy task when obstacles and impediments were showered before thee, and which would have baffled most men? Was it a boy's romance of feeling?"

"My remark was too hasty, I acknowledge. I ask thy pardon——"

"Nay, I need not that. I love her—I have no words to express the extent, but it is not a love which would sacrifice her happiness, in order that mine might be secured; and I would therefore know, if possible, whether her station is above mine; if, indeed, her position is such that I may or may not hope a time will come when I can ask her to be the beloved wife of Wat Tyler."

"With respect to her position, Wat, there is no height of station to which a true heart, rich in the nobility of human nature, might not aspire. Were she an empress, and thou a poor peasant, but one whose deeds were pure and unstained, you would be her equal—perhaps her superior in the eyes of the great and good God who reigns over and judges us by what we think and do, and not by society's laws; therefore there should be no reason why you should not raise your eyes to her, were she thrice what she is. Answer me and speak truly, does she love you?"

"As a sister loves a very dear brother, I know that she regards me dearly, perhaps more dearly, but I will not advance beyond that. We have always lived together, looked to each other for every pleasure, never had an angry word, and were ever anxious to do everything to make each other happy. Until lately—within these three days, I never dreamed of her loving any one but me. I had reason since, however, to suppose she had given her heart to another, and have tried to discover whether she has."

"And has she?"

"I think not. I challenged her with it, and received such replies as almost to confirm my opinion, but after circumstances have induced me to alter it. I have, however, come to this conclusion, that it will be better for us to part, and I purpose quitting Brenchley immediately. While I am away she will have opportunities of seeing others, of letting absence test her feelings for me, and judging whether the many happy years we have passed in each other's society should make her wish that we should spend the remainder of our lives together. I would not force her inclination one hair's breadth; her sole and complete happiness is all I study, and let the pain and sacrifice to myself be what they may, I will strive hard to secure it. I shall not think ill of her if she loves another, because our love is not under our own control. I may wish it otherwise, but she should never be the sufferer; and I firmly believe I shall but be doing her judgment, her inclinings justice, by, for a time, removing myself from her presence. I have tried to be since I have known her, even from childhood, everything to her; her wishes were scarcely formed ere I gratified them, and I watched over her as tenderly and anxiously as a devoted parent would over a loved child whose nature was fragile and delicate. It has always been my care that no harm should come to her; and now I am going away from her, I am more than anxious there should be one to supply my place. I—I think she will miss me; but I would have the want felt as little as could be—not at all, if possible; and I have thought if you are he in whose care she was placed, you will obey the words of that letter placed with her, which, since you have repeated them to me, have been engraven deeply upon my heart, for they come so home to my feelings. 'Cherish and tend this child as though it was a holy charge from thy Maker to thee. Suffer no harm or danger to come near it while thou hast life and strength. Do this for the sake of all you ever held dear, and you shall one day be rewarded by that thou dost most hope for.' Those were the words, and to thee I repeat them, in the hope that they will make some impression upon thee, as they did—as they must have done, when thou didst first hear them. Answer me, I pray thee! art thou not the Halbert Evesham of whom thou didst first speak?"

"My noble boy! would the world were peopled with such as thee!" exclaimed Ethelbert, with a sudden enthusiasm, dashing a tear away from his eyelid. He paused for a moment, and then recovering himself, said, "I am he of whom I spake; but my name is Ethelbert Evesham; Halbert is my only brother."

"He is?"

"Even so; we were twinned at a birth, were alike in everything, in person, manner, lineaments, voice—ay, even in fate, till fate separated us; we married two sisters, Editha and Ghita, both beautiful, each equally adored, and both torn from us by similar means, though by different persons; of Ghita we never heard more; I have learned much of Editha. At our bereavement our destinies changed; he lost his reason for two years; I retained mind, but lost the kindness of disposition I felt for human kind, and a morose, savage fierceness took its place—a burning thirst for revenge. I attended Halbert constantly and by dint of assiduity, gentle treatment, and great patience, he was restored to his faculties, and I still continued nursing my desire for revenge. At length I received Violet; I read the lines, I knew the characters were traced by my Editha's hand. At first a horrid thought flashed through my mind that she had been vilely dishonoured, and this child was the result; my heart throbbed as if it had been pierced by a weapon of liquid fire, scorching, blasting it; and, in the fury of the moment, I raised my dagger to plunge it in its breast, when the little fair thing

turned its small weeping eyes upon me and smiled. I cast the dagger from me, and fell upon my knees, praying God to forgive my wicked intention. Again my burning eyes traced the lines on the parchment. I was at little trouble to attribute my misery to the noble I served, and I then took a deep oath to be revenged on all concerned in the vile wrong. Placing the scroll in my bosom, I carefully wrapped up the infant, and took my way to the stables, saddled one of the fastest horses, and galloped over to Halbert's residence, awoke him, coined a story—for I knew the secret was best kept while in my own breast—and sent him away in the darkness to a village some distance from where he lived. I saw him on his road, and by day break returned to the castle. In two days Sir John Maltravers, my lord, returned.

"What! was the monster who caused Edward II. to be so horribly murdered the noble whom you served?"

"The same; and 'Grif of the Bloody Hand,' that same William Ogle who, in conjunction with Gourney, perpetrated the dreadful deed."

"Holy Virgin! is it possible?"

"Ay, there was not a villany so monstrous that hardened ruffian would not for gold have committed;—but to my story. When Sir John returned I sought his presence, dissembled as well as I could the intense hatred I had conceived for him, and requested leave to depart; he gave me permission, with an affectation of kindness that made my blood grow cold, and creep and crawl through my veins, and then rush violently through them as if each one would burst; twenty times my fingers were on my dagger, but I restrained myself, for I had resolved to have a tremendous revenge, one which would not be satisfied by his death alone, and I left him to work it out. I removed Halbert with the child from place to place, until he came hither, and here I knew he was beyond the reach of discovery. I had laid my plans, and they began to succeed to my fullest wishes. Edward of Cærnarvon, through means I employed, esteemed Sir John a traitor, treated him as such, imprisoned him, seized his lands, and visited him with every suffering but death; but when through Edward's weakness he lost the kingdom, Sir John with others was released. During this time I had used every means to discover my ill-fated Editha; I had so disguised myself that none could know me, and entered into the service of the Earl of Berkeley. By dint of great perseverance I found my wife had been there, but that she had, as was supposed, been carried off by Grif. The villain, however, confessed to me that he had persuaded her to fly with him, in order to restore her to me."

"Did he restore her?"

"No! he only told her the lie to induce her to trust herself with him, that he might perpetrate a damnable wrong upon her, for which, had he a million of lives, I would have had them all. But he was defeated. However, I was soon on his track, and as he was always near Sir John, I had them both beneath a never-slumbering watch. At times my pursuit seemed tedious, and I resolved at once to accomplish what I proposed doing by slow degrees; but I nerved myself to my original intention, and soon the nation was horror-stricken by Edward's frightful death, though few steps were taken respecting it at the time, until I had perseveringly worked, and the downfall of Mortimer, Queen Isabella's favourite, caused the ruin of Sir John Maltravers, and he was compelled to fly for his life. I, however, never lost sight of him,—caused his capture; he was ordered to be racked and then beheaded. I let him know that it was *I* who had accomplished it—*I* whom he had so wronged—and howling curses upon me, he was dragged to his doom, while I went in search of Grif. I believed, from information that I had obtained, that he had fled to Spain. I set a hot search for him, aided by a large reward offered by Parliament, but Gourney only was captured, and killed before he was brought to England. While thus engaged, Sir John escaped, and in searching after him I obtained intelligence of Ogle; believing that Sir John would be near him, I hastened to make use of my information, but being only slightly informed, had some difficulty in tracing him from place to place; but at last my efforts were crowned with success—I found him established here as a leader of a band of ruffians, and distinguished by the appellative of Grif of the Bloody Hand. Upon him I have worked the full measure of my revenge—he is dead, and died knowing that I had caused his death; after, too, believing that he had purchased his life by telling me all he knew respecting Editha, and giving me to understand where she is."

"Then she still lives?"

"She does; but is dead to me and all the world; she has taken the veil."

"Holy Mother! thy lot, indeed, is a sad one."

"The will of the Almighty be done, I must not complain, bitterly as I feel the dispensation. If I have been wronged, I have been revenged on those who have done it; the pangs I have suffered cannot, great as they have been, much surpass in anguish those experienced by Sir John Maltravers and Grif of the Bloody Hand, and when I have secured Sir John, I shall lay me down and die, satisfied that my wrongs have been repaid."

"You will see Editha again?"

"Once more, if it please heaven! I will visit her and learn who are really the parents of Violet; albeit, Grif told me that an infant daughter of Sir John Maltravers disappeared at the time I received Violet, leading me to infer that she is the child."

"I knew she came of noble blood," exclaimed Wat, enthusiastically."

"We have yet to learn its truth. I am not quite satisfied that it is so; but even if it be, there is no reason why, though she comes of an evil family—save her mother—that you should not wed her if she loves you; not that I would have you alter your intention of separating for a time—you act nobly in so doing. I misjudge you, too, if your condition will not be by your acts mightily improved, and rendered much less than it is beneath that of a grand-daughter of the proud Earl of Berkeley."

"I will do my best to make it so, and am glad that you agree with the conclusion at which I have arrived. I shall have the consolation of knowing, also, that when I am far away, Violet will suffer nothing from inattention. That, if anything should happen to Halbert, who loves her as his life, that you will be at her side to tend her wants, and keep her from those ills a protecting arm can shield her from."

"Were she my own child, she could not be more gently treated, more tenderly cared for, than she shall be by me; and if I discover who really are her parents, and her happiness be increased by being restored to them, a needless hour shall not be passed until she is enfolded in their arms."

"You gladden my heart much to hear thee. Wilt thou not tell her all thou knowest of her parents?"

"Not if her father is Sir John Maltravers. His wicked deeds should be buried in oblivion, not repeated—especially to his child, and that child Violet."

"You need not speak of his deeds; but it will ease her mind much to know who are her parents."

"Will it gladden her gentle heart to hear, think you, that her mother is dead, her father an outcast, and her brother the villain who strove to carry her off so lately?"

"Horror! Is Martin du Bois her brother?"

"If Sir John Maltravers is her father, he is, being the only son of Sir John; but I have reason to doubt Grif's story, inasmuch as when living with the family, I never heard of any other child than this son, and from the many inquiries I made at the time, if there had been one, I think I should have heard of it; however, we shall soon know. Ere long I will to the convent, see Editha—Heaven enable us both to bear the meeting with fortitude!—and ascertain from her the truth. When that has taken place, I will communicate to her the result. If she should be the daughter of Sir John, what can be done to soften his character shall, that she may not feel it would be better never to have known her parent than be the child of such a villain. I will, however, see her and my brother. Years have elapsed since we met. The grievous circumstances under which we parted will scarce be unremembered when we meet, and I would have him prepared for my coming, that his mind may not be shocked at suddenly encountering me. You will perhaps go before me, speak of me to him, and after telling him that you have seen me, say I am about to visit him, and give me a signal to enter, which I will be at hand to obey."

"You will first divest yourself yourself of that mask and helmet; both he and Violet would look upon you with some alarm, were you to appear thus attired."

"The necessity for their use has passed away, and when my brother looks upon me they will have been cast away—I hope never to be resumed. You spoke of your time being short, let me no longer here detain you, nor after you have done me the kindness I have just asked of you."

"I said so, because I am going to London to-night."

"To-night?"

"Yes! a friend of mine, who last night fought so gallantly with us, taking offence at the thoughtless conduct of a maiden he loves, and being much wounded in spirit, has joined Sir Walter Manny's troop, and on the instant departed for London. Flora, the maiden who caused him to take this step, is inconsolable at his departure, and has so much taken it to heart, that it is much to be feared she will lose her reason, if not her life. I have, at her earnest entreaty, promised to go to London in search of him, and prevail upon him to return."

"I fear your errand will be a hopeless one. Edward is much in want of soldiers, and if he has once entered the army he will not have his discharge granted him upon any such plea as you can make; if you do not overtake him, your journey will be in vain."

"I fear I shall be unable to overtake him; but whatever goodwill can accomplish, that shall be done. I go now to prepare Halbert for your coming; I will appear at the door, and wave my hand when it is time for you to approach."

"I will be ready. I need not to suggest to thee to perform thy task with as much delicacy as thou canst; for there are so many bitter remembrances involved in our meeting, that it will render it essential to both that the nerves be strong to bear it."

"Trust me, I will be cautious. Farewell until we meet there."

"Farewell!"

Wat darted away, and the stranger watched his retreating form until it had neared Halbert's cottage, and then he hastily retired deeper into the wood, but only for a short distance; he then took off his helmet and his mask, and divesting himself of the garb worn by the devils, appeared in a dress which fitted almost tightly to his shape, of dark green, which he had worn underneath the other; placing the cast-off habiliments beneath some brushwood, he returned to the spot where Wat Tyler had just quitted him, and stood there motionless a few minutes. Presently he heard footsteps approach, and on the impulse cowered down behind a small thicket, but in a moment remembered there was no longer a necessity to put in practice habits he had with such industry acquired, and smiled at the force of habit which had induced him to do it. He rose up and looked out openly for the comers, who turned out to be Leowulf and Ulph, the cowherd, who was by the smith's side most loquaciously engaged.

"Well met, my bold smith," cried Ethelbert. "I perceive thou hast attended to my behest."

"My bold smith! Thy behest! Who art thou who speaks thus knowingly to one who does not boast thy acquaintance?" exclaimed Leowulf, stopping and gazing on him with wondering eyes.

"Not know me? Look upon me again."

"I do, and may until doomsday, before I can tell thee who thou art."

"Thy companion, I believe, will not be so dull. Thou knowest me, Ulph?"

"Never set eyes on you before in my life," exclaimed Ulph.

"Indeed! So much for thy veracity," said Ethelbert, sarcastically. "My good Leowulf, thy memory is a short one."

"Dost thou stay me to bandy jokes?" cried the smith, with a frown, preparing to bring his sword from his shoulder to his hands.

"Yes," exclaimed Ulph, drawing nearer to Leowulf; "I would advise you to troop, my fine fellow; it is no joke to joke with us—is it, good friend?"

"Pish, fool!" muttered Ethelbert, with a frown. "Hast thou so soon forgotten Ethelbert Evesham?"

"Thou he?" exclaimed Leowulf.

"Thou he?" cried Ulph, at the same moment, opening his eyes to an unusual width.

"Has a change of garment so altered me you could not recognise me?"

"It has. For if it were not for a certain difference in voice and manner, and even now in dress, I should believe you to be Halbert Evesham, your face is so wondrously like his; I do not doubt now that you are Ethelbert Evesham, and can understand what you mean by having done your behest. Here is the fellow, and you can judge if he has told me truth."

"I thank thee for the promptitude and correctness thou hast shown, good smith, hitherto, to all I have required of thee during our brief acquaintance. When we are better known to each other, you may be able to point out some way in which I can repay the obligation; one to which you will add, if you will favour me by fixing your eye upon Halbert Evesham's dwelling, and telling me when you see any one issue forth and wave their hand, while I interrogate this fellow."

"There's no obligation, friend Ethelbert; if there is any, it is what, as a member of yon village, I owe you for counselling and aiding us with such good ability as to overthrow an attempt which might have destroyed Brenchley and all its inmates; and instead of receiving thanks, I feel bound to render them to you, at the same time offering to do any service for you an honourable man may require, or an honest man perform. I am long-sighted, and if any one but show an arm from yon door, I can see it. The moment one appears you shall know it."

"Thanks. Now, Ulph, look upon my face—do you remember it?"

"Yes; I know you to be Ethelbert Evesham."

"Ethelbert! How know you me by that title, beyond hearing me so name myself?"

"I have seen you years ago; the last time was when you were not aware of my presence."

"Ha! when did that take place—recently?"

"No; some fifteen years ago."

"Fifteen years! What mean you?"

"What I say. The last time I looked upon you is as long since."

"It is false. Look again upon me; seest thou not Mat Snake before thee?"

"Why—oh—Holy St. Mary!—it is! I thought thy face was familiar to me; but—but I—I saw thee shot dead by Grif—thou'rt a——"

"I am he whom thou didst betray, after seeking to release thee from a thraldom to which thou wert unequal. I sought to do thee service, miserable wretch! and thou didst requite it by placing me at the mercy of the bloody-minded Grif."

"I—I—indeed I could not help it. A devil overheard us talk of quitting, and acquainted Grif, who knew I possessed secrets of his, and when he heard of our intention, he believed I was going to betray him; he came to me and threatened instantly to murder me, unless I told all the truth. I knew how little he cared for shedding blood, and to save my life I told him all; you would have done the same had you been in my situation. But I saw him shoot thee, I saw thee fall, and I have been most unhappy ever since, believing I had caused thy death."

"He missed me: that is enough. Now tell me when, as Ethelbert Evesham, you saw me, and where?"

"At the castle of Sir John Maltravers; you were sleeping; I brought a child and placed it by thy side."

"Great Heaven! is this so? From whom didst thou bring that child?"

"From thy wife Editha."

"Didst thou know whose child it was? Speak—quick, I am on the rack."

"Not then; but I can tell you how I got it, and why I brought it. I was a serf on the Earl of Berkeley's estate at that time. I used to come sometimes to the castle. One evening I had been to the buttery with milk; that is, the temporary one, because they were repairing the regular and proper one at the time. I was late; I had been kept there by a —a young damsel; it was not my fault—but you are impatient, I see. Well, I had to cross some dreary passages to reach the court-yard—do you know Berkeley Castle? were you ever in it?"

"Yes, yes: proceed with thy story."

"Well, the passages, from the eastern to the western wing, are very desolate, complex, not much frequented, and haunted by the sprites of people horribly murdered years ago. If there is anything I am alarmed at, it is ghosts. From a child I never could endure ghosts; ghost stories always——"

"Wretch! if you would not be strangled, go on with thy tale."

"If you look so fiercely and say such things, you will frighten it all out of my memory; it is a difficult matter to rake up things which took place so long ago."

"Either tell all you know at once without digression, or hold thy peace, and meet with the fate of thy companions; after whom, if thou dost persist in this roundabout fashion of telling thy secret, thou shalt be sent speedily."

"I will do my best, if you will grant me a little patience. Let me see; where was I? Oh! crossing the passages leading from the eastern to the western wing. I told you it was late—nearly all the inmates of the castle were hushed in repose; and as it was not known by any of them but one that I was still there, I was obliged to use every caution to get away unobserved even by the sentry, who paced up and down or else dozed at the entry. I had no light; I crept along the dark, winding, narrow, gloomy, horrible-looking passages, expecting at every step to see horrid faces grin at me at every turn, or some hideous wretch start up and——"

"Remember; my patience is almost exhausted."

"I must tell my story my own way; by interrupting me, you make me longer than I should be. I will come to the principal part as quick as I can; but to be very correct, I must aid my memory by calling to mind all the little things that took place, because one recollection brings another——"

"Will you go on? I want only to hear what actually occurred, not what you fancied and expected. Give me thy story without any embellishments. If thou dost not proceed in this fashion, I will not tax my patience by listening to thee."

"I'll try what I can do. Where was—oh—ah!—I went slowly along, not in a very stout frame of mind, as you may guess; well, to my horror, I heard footsteps following me; at first I thought they were the echo of my own, and with a throbbing heart I stopped to listen, but I was quickly convinced that they were somebody else's, for they continued advancing when I was still. Thump, thump, went my heart, banging against my side; my hair rose straight up and stood perpendicular—my teeth chattered—my knees knocked together. 'Here comes,' thought I, 'the spirit of a murdered'——well, well—I see you won't let me tell you what I thought; but off I darted, never caring or thinking whether anybody in the castle discovered me, so that the ghost didn't catch me. I must confess I was very much terrified; I never could face a ghost—I know very few who can. Well, you may guess how my alarm was increased at hearing the footsteps after me increase their speed; I even believed I could hear the rustle of the winding-sheet as the spectre flew after me. It was quite dark, but instinct guided me, and misled me; I turned down some wrong passage, got into a corridor leading to the apartments of the western wing, and went crash against a door at the bottom, making the hollow place resound with the noise of the concussion. I hurt my head, but was too frightened to think about that, and felt all round for an outlet, but there was not one—I say there was not one. Oh! my feelings at that moment! I wished myself a fly, that I could crawl up the wall—a mouse, that I could run into a hole—a——very well, I'll go on quick as I can. I felt all round, but there was no place to get out; and in a state of most dismal apprehension down I dropped; I screwed my head between my knees, and round them I clasped my arms; I shrank into a corner, rolled up like a ball, and awaited in the direst fright all the freaks it might please the goblin to play upon me. I heard the footsteps come pattering along, the winding-sheet, as I thought, loudly rustle; soon was the spot where I lay reached. I have some confused recollection of hearing the unseen figure stop —I have some remembrance of a pair of hands stretched out in search of me, groping about, and at last alighting on my head, making my blood run cold within me. I gabbled every prayer over that I had ever learned; and, before I had finished, I felt my senses leave me, and I was conscious of nothing more until I found myself near a window, the broad bright

moon shining in, and a figure in white supporting my head, and whispering words of a cheering, encouraging nature to me."

"And who was this figure, fool?"

"A woman! And who do you think she was?"

"Wretch! you are trifling with me. I'll hear no more; I was an idiot to lose so much time, but I'll be fooled no longer. Away with him, Leowulf! and let him be carefully guarded until he is safely dispatched after his late companions."

"No, no, no; I will tell you all as quick as I can. The female was Editha—your wife Editha. She spoke to me; told me not to be afraid, she would not harm me; and asked me to do her a service. I did not know what to think or do—I did not——"

"Did you consent?"

"I did."

"And what was the service?"

"That's what I am coming to, if you will not hurry me so, and drive it all out of my head. I told her I was willing to do her any service she might require of me; in fact, I was afraid to refuse, because I was not yet quite certain that she was not a spirit. She then said, 'My good youth, you are not in a state to-night to perform the task I require of you—that of conveying something a distance from here; but will you meet me here at this hour to-morrow night?' I crossed myself, and faltered forth 'I will.' She smiled when she saw me tremble, and bade me be of good cheer; that she was no ghost, but real right-down substantial flesh and blood—not very substantial, by-the-bye, for she was wan, and pale, and very thin; but she spoke so mildly and gently, her voice was so soft and her words so kind, that I thought if she was a spectre, she was at least an angelic one; so I mustered up a little courage, and promised, vowing that, whatever came to pass, I would do as she wished. She pressed my hand thankfully, bade me not to fail, and to use all the caution and discretion I could; then she disappeared through some passage known to herself. I took notice of the place, departed, marking each place that I might remember my way, and thinking——"

"Did you go on the following night?"

"Oh, yes! At first I thought I would not—I did not like—it might have been an evil sprite trying to deceive me into something dreadful; but then her sweetness, her pleasant voice, got the better of my irresolution. I began to ask myself why I should fear—why——"

"You went—and was she there to meet you?"

"No! I waited a short time, and began to fear she would not come; at last she did, and in her arms she bore something closely enveloped in a thick mantle. When she reached me, she addressed some words of thanks to me, and opening one part of the covering showed me the pretty face of a sleeping child. I started back astonished, and had a horrid fear that she wanted me to slay it."

"Fool!"

"I don't know that; not such a fool; for those sort of things were and are very commonly done. And there are always plenty to do such deeds—but I am not one; how was I to know that she had not singled me out to——"

"Go on with thy story, never mind anything else."

"Very well. However, I started back; she noted my surprised look and probably guessed my thoughts, for she said gently, 'Good friend, there must not be a hair of this dear infant's head meet with harm. I have sought you to do me this service, because I know you to be tender-hearted; and waited to speak with thee for an hour at least, last night, while thou wert in the buttery, and as I approached thee when thou didst come forth, some strange alarm took possession of thee, and thou didst fly from me with great speed;' I blush'd all over; she had overheard, of course, my love ma——"

"Keep to thy tale."

"She then asked me if I knew the castle of Sir John Maltravers. I told her I did, that the porter was a cousin of mine; and she then inquired anxiously if I could gain admittance through his means without being observed, or the burthen I bore being seen. I said I would try; and then she placed a purse of gold pieces in my hand, promising another if I did my work well. She bade me convey the infant to your chamber in Sir John's castle, and take my opportunity to put it there, without suffering you to see me. I knew her name, and when she mentioned yours, I asked if you were her husband. She said yes, and then I asked if the infant was hers. She said no, but it was the child of one dearly and nearly connected with her."

"Nearly and dearly connected with her? You must make some mistake. It was the child of Sir John Maltravers."

"Oh, no! you mistake. Sir John's child was not lost until some time after I took the child to you."

"Can that be truth? If you are not uttering falsehoods, what you now tell me is indeed of importance. Proceed. It was you, then, who brought the child to me?"

"Yes, it was; and directly I will prove what I say of Sir John's infant is correct. Your wife, as I told you, said the child she put into my care was not hers, and with other directions, bade me be very careful not to be seen by you, or, if by any unlucky chance it should so fall out that you discovered me, I was on no account to speak of her. I was to say that I had the child from any one but her."

"Why did she say this?"

"That's what I asked her; for I was surprised, if you was her husband, that she should wish to keep herself hidden from you; and then she said—weeping, poor thing, as if her heart would break—that she was kept prisoner from you; that if you knew where she was, you would not rest until you had restored her to your home; but such an attempt would cost you your life, and she would break her heart and die desolate rather than harm should come to you through her. Poor creature—poor creature! my heart ached to see how bitterly she sobbed and wept when she spoke of you. She said that she had no hope of ever seeing you again—none whatever, for she should be in her grave before such a blessing could come to pass, she was sinking to it very fast—I am sure she looked so. I could have wept too, and I think I did—however, that's nothing to the purpose. I took the child and got away from the castle unperceived; I crossed the Severn in a boat which was always there for the use of the castle inmates, and hastened home; there I got a horse, and made the best of my way to Sir John's castle. It was very early in the morning when I reached there. I managed to get into the castle without my cousin seeing what I had with me, and I tried to get to your chamber unnoticed; but it was impossible, you scarce ever left it, and was away for so short a time when you did, that I could not execute my mission unless I waited until you were buried in slumber, which at length I resolved to do. I had a sad day of it to keep the child from being seen. The poor little thing cried for food. I was obliged to get some secretly to satisfy it. At last, however, night came. I entered your chamber—placed the child close by your side, left the room, and day-break was scarce an hour old before I was on my road home, having performed my task with complete success."

"Too well, too well. Had you but told me of Editha's situation, what years of misery might have been spared us both! Finish thy story—you saw her again?"

"Yes: it struck me while returning that if I could but become acquainted with all the particulars of this mysterious affair, I should be able at some future time to make a beneficial use of my knowledge; and determined not to satisfy my employer of the safety of the infant until I obtained from her an elucidation of the whole affair—"

"You, too, miserable wretch! must add to the num-

ber of those who were rendering her life a succession of agonies."

"But I did not do it with that idea; my only motive was to do good to myself."

"Without care or consideration of the agony you were inflicting upon her."

"I tell you I never thought about it. I never imagined for a moment that my taciturnity would add to any misery she might be suffering—no such idea ever crossed me. I certainly was selfish, for I looked to my own benefit; and yet not exactly selfish, because, you must understand, that the little damsel I passed the evening with in the buttery, when your wife first engaged me in her service, I wanted to make my wife, and my means were slender; I therefore thought——"

"No matter, proceed with thy tale."

"Where did I leave off? Oh! I was coming home, and thinking that I——"

"You reached Berkeley Castle, I suppose, without hindrance, and again saw Editha?"

"A—a—yes; but you put me out. I must tell you that before I reached Berkeley Castle I met William, and he——"

"Who is William?"

"Why, Grif, as he was lately called. I am ashamed to say, he was my brother."

"Thy brother?

"That is, half-brother. We were born of the same mother; but she married my father when Grif was about ten years old. He was always a wicked, wilful boy."

"Doubtless: but when thou didst meet him, what followed?"

"He saw that I had been some distance, and asked me whither I had been. I hesitated, for I did not like to tell him; as, if I had, he would have made no scruple whatever in sending me home, making me keep there, while he would have gone to the lady, told her what had been done—what I had accomplished—and appropriated whatever she might feel disposed to give to his own use; therefore I gave him an evasive reply. He, however, would not take it; and laying hold of my ear, pinched it so horribly hard that I fully believed it was no longer my property, at the same time he grinned savagely in my face, and said unless I told him all the truth, he would slice me into small pieces and throw me into the kennel at Berkeley Castle, for the dogs to make a dinner of me. I knew very well that unless I told him the truth, or something very plausible, he would not have the smallest compunction to keep his promise, however unbrotherly. I kept him off as long as I could, by protesting I was sworn to secrecy, and for my soul's sake I dare not tell. He would not be satisfied with anything I could say, until at last I told him that I had been employed by the seneschal of the castle to carry an infant to a relation of his, a vassal upon the estate of Sir John Maltravers. I added, that I believed the infant was a love-child, and implored him, upon no consideration whatever, to let what he had heard from me escape his lips. He laughed scornfully, saying the secret was neither worth keeping nor telling. He asked how much I had received for the service. I knew why he asked, and said five gold pieces, which he no sooner learned than he requested me, not in very entreating terms, to give them to him. I was obliged to consent, but begged of him not to take all; however, he said gold would corrupt my morals, and, having once cast his eye upon the glittering coin, there was no hope that he would restore a fraction. He inquired if I was likely to get any more. I replied, quickly, no; but he said I could ask—nay, demand it; and to make sure, he would come with me and enforce it. I broke out into a cold sweat at the proposition, and tried all means to dissuade him from his purpose—but my entreaties were in vain. He said he wanted a little money; mark that—*he* wanted a little money, and he thought that as good a way as any to obtain some. I had done all the work, and he was thus coolly to take the pay for it. He was my brother, so I thought he would not really hurt me, I therefore flatly refused to comply. He loooked rather astonished at the boldness I displayed, and again tried to catch hold of my ear; but this time I was aware of his intention, and drew back out of his reach. He then uttered a tremendous oath, and drew forth his long knife. The very glitter of the blade was enough for me. I clapped spurs to my little steed, and galloped off as hard as he could go, leaving Grif standing there, vowing all sorts of horrid vengeance. I went direct home, and did not move forth all that day nor the next, keeping myself hidden, in expectation of his coming home after me, and compelling me to do as he desired; but he did not come, and I feared he had been to the seneschal and discovered the lie I had told him. I grew very anxious, and at length mustered up courage sufficient to go to the castle and see what had been done. I waited until nightfall, and then I quitted my home. I reached the castle as the moon was rising, and on entering I inquired for Grif, and to my very great satisfaction learned that he had been despatched by Sir John Maltravers on some errand immediately he had entered the court-yard, before, as I guessed, he had time to say anything of what I had told him, and he was not yet returned. This was good news. My heart felt much lighter, and I hastened to the buttery, where I met my little wife that was to be, and I sat myself comfortably——"

"Will you keep to those parts of your story wherein I am concerned, and not enlarge upon matter of neither moment or connection with me?"

"Ah, but it was of moment to me. I may be a fool and a coward, but I have my feelings as well as other people. You said I had no consideration for your suffering wife, when I thought of turning what I knew to my own interest; you are now showing to me exactly the same feeling that I did then to her."

"What mean you?"

"Why, that humble as I and the little damsel I spoke of were, we loved each other very dearly, and we were to be married; but two days before that happy event was to take place, I was torn away by Grif, and have never seen her since. I learned, though, she took my departure very much to heart; and though I was and am a fool and coward, and she only the daughter of a serf, yet she broke her heart, pined away, and died. I thought I should have done so too, when I heard of it, but I am still here, though I have never had one happy moment since. Now, perhaps, you will understand why I cannot help—in telling you the story which concerns you—speaking and thinking of her, for it was at that time we were so happy together."

"I will curb my impatience, my poor fellow. Tell thy story in thine own fashion."

"Many thanks: I shall be quite as quick as if you were interrupting me, however roundabout my manner of relating it may be. I told you I reached the buttery quite safely, and there I passed three pleasant hours, until it was just midnight; then I left it and repaired to the spot where I was to have met Editha two nights previously. She was there, had been there each night waiting until the dawn of morning in anxious expectation of my coming—fearing, as each hour drew on without my appearance, some mis-

hap had befallen me, that I had been detected by you, and many other things which she told me, but which I forget now; when she perceived me she flew towards me, seized my hand, and said, 'Did you see Ethelbert—is he alive?—well? speak quickly.' I said I had only seen you sleeping on your couch; you then, in the pale light of the moon, looked wan and thin—but I had inquired respecting you of my cousin, who told me that you had been very dull, spiritless, and woe-begone, ever since her loss. It made her weep to hear this; I tried to comfort her, and was so moved by her anguish that I quite forgot what I had intended to do, and told her everything which had transpired, except my meeting with Grif. In a little while afterwards I recollected what I had purposed, but it was too late; however, a thought struck me, and I asked her if she had a sufficiently good opinion of me, from what I had already done for her, to confide entirely in me, and let me know who the child really belonged to, with all the circumstances connected with its birth, and the motives which caused it to be carried thus privately away. She eyed me steadily for a few minutes, and then inquired my reason for wishing to know these things. I replied, that if she made me acquainted with the secret I might, at some future time, be able to disclose it when it would be of the highest importance that it should be known; that I should be an undeniable witness, having carried the child from place to place, and I promised to keep it hidden until the time arrived which should make its discovery valuable to all. She hesitated for a short time, and then took both my hands in hers, saying, 'Thou mayst judge by my appearance and actions that I have been, and am, very unhappy. Indeed, I have been basely used, and have suffered deeply; if I put trust in thee, thou wilt not add to the number of those who have so much wronged me?' 'I will not,' I answered, steadfastly. 'If thou dost, then will I never trust more in human kind; but think, good youth, if the maiden upon whom thou hast fixed thy heart were to be torn from thee and kept away, as I am from him I have so tenderly loved—think what would be thy pain if thou couldst know she had placed trust in one, with the hope that some day you might be benefitted by it, and that she had been deceived and betrayed by him she had put faith in, you would grieve, and vex, and feel much bitterness; therefore do not inflict on others that which you would so eagerly avoid yourself—if I trust thee, do not betray me.' 'Indeed,' I said, 'you shall not have cause to complain of me: if you still doubt me, keep thy secret within thy breast—I will not seek further to know it, nor think hardly of thee because thou didst not tell me.' 'I will trust thee,' she said; 'but never reveal it to any until you have disclosed it to Ethelbert. He will then counsel you how to act; but tell it not to him until you are assured he will not be liable to encounter any danger through knowing it.' I promised; and then she commenced by saying you had a twin-brother, who had wedded her sister, and that they had both been torn from their homes by violence, and that she had lately, while in the castle, discovered her."

"Who—Ghita?"

"Yes—that is the name! Ghita—I recollect it well; but she did not at first say how or where. She said she had seen her; that it was she who placed the child in her possession; that its parents would not be disclosed until they were able to acknowledge and claim her; that Ethelbert Evesham alone was by them requested, from some very particular but unexplained motive, to take charge of it, until a time should come when it would be removed from his care; and, in conclusion, that it was the offspring of one closely connected to thee by ties of blood as well as friendship."

"You are uttering strange things. Art thou sure thy memory is not treacherous?"

"I am sure that I am telling you what Editha told me."

"But did she not say who they were who were closely connected with me by ties of blood as well as friendship?"

"No—that would be explained only at a certain time; but whether that time is come is a matter of uncertainty. I asked of her the question you now ask me, and the reply I have just given you."

"You involve me in greater doubt than ever respecting the parentage of Violet. What more said Editha?"

"She said that Ghita was in a convent, not a very long distance from Berkeley, and the discovery had been made through a confessor, who attended both; and who, struck by the similarity of their histories and names, had communicated to each the fact of the other's existence; that it was he who brought the child to the castle, and he was accompanied by Ghita, who came secretly——"

"What! visited Editha?"

"Yes, as I tell you, came with the confessor."

"Holy Mother of God! if she was able to do that, why did she not return to her husband?"

"Why, I can guess, though I was not told. When Editha spoke of your brother, she said he had died raving mad through excessive grief at the loss of his wife."

"It is explained—it was so reported. Had Ghita taken the veil, know you?"

"At that time I did not know any more about her than I have told you."

"Did Editha give you no more information than you have disclosed to me respecting Violet, nor any clue by which I might hereafter discover who were her parents?"

"She said she knew no more; but the clue she gave was, that when you required to know you were to seek out Ghita, who would remain at the convent until she died, and in the event of her death a packet would be left containing all you desired to know."

"Do you know where the convent stands?"

"Yes; five miles south of Wickwar."

"Ha! Editha is there if she yet be living."

"There! What! at the convent? Not she. I know where she is, and I am the only one."

"You! Is she not in the convent? Has she not taken the veil?

"Taken the veil! No."

"Merciful Heaven, I thank Thee!" cried Ethelbert, throwing himself upon his knees, and gazing heavenwards with the most earnest enthusiasm. Then springing to his feet, he seized Ulph's hand, and cried, "If thou hast told me truth, and can prove it to me, I will make thy future life as happy as thy previous one has been miserable. Go on, go on—tell me all; I am on fire until I hear more."

"I suppose Grif told thee she was in a convent, and had taken the veil?"

"He did—execrable villain!"

"Ah! that was what he learned from me. But to my story. I offered to do anything Editha wished towards restoring her to you, but she thanked me deeply, and said that it was impossible; the first step to produce such a happy event would be the signal for your death, and she would rather, great as was the agony, remain where she was, than be the cause of your being inhumanly slaughtered. I could not

change her; and so, rewarded with a profusion of thanks and another purse of gold, I quitted her; but I used often to see her, for soon afterwards I came to live in the castle, giving up my occupation as cowherd to take that of a servitor who died. My duty was to attend upon Sir John Maltravers, and I was not long in discovering the whole story, that he was the villain who had caused all your misery. Your wife Editha attended solely upon the Lady Maltravers, but the little maiden of whom I was so fond was often an assistant. She was talking to me one night of her lady, and of Editha—she spoke of her beauty and her grief. I foolishly hinted that I knew the reason, and Margaret—that was the name of my love—said she did as well. I doubted; a slight quarrel arose; and I found it had been reported you were killed, through meeting with a dreadful accident at a boar hunt. I denied it, and let out that it was because Sir John had carried her off. In a moment I was aware of my imprudence, and begged of her not to disclose what I had told her; she promised not, but persisted that you were dead. I afterwards found that the report was spread by Sir John to deceive your wife."

"This was the tale, then, which Grif told me was coined by Sir John of my death."

"Grif told you so, did he? Well he might, for it was him who swore he saw you killed; but Editha did not believe it; and Margaret got so interested in her from what I had told her, that taking an opportunity she told Lady Maltravers the whole affair; her Ladyship challenged Sir John with it; there was a terrible to do; he denied, and still stoutly maintained you were dead. Very shortly after this, Grif disappeared with Editha, and Sir John was frantic; he knew how great a villain Grif was, that he would stay at nothing, however monstrous, to accomplish anything he had undertaken. Half the people of the castle were dispatched in search of her, Lady Maltravers vowing that Sir John had caused her to be carried off, and would not be reconciled to him until she was produced; but though we searched in every direction, we were unable to discover her until Grif again made his appearance. He managed by some means to make his peace with Sir John, and gave him to understand she was at the convent where Ghita had taken up her abode, and expected that he would be dispatched to bring her back; but to this Sir John would not consent, and I was sent——"

"You! did not Sir John go?"

"No! I guessed, from seeing Grif again, that tidings were to be had of Editha; I told Margaret so, and by my advice she hinted as much to Lady Maltravers, who no sooner understood this, than she set to work at Sir John until she drew from him Grif's information, and expressed his intention of going to the convent to fetch her; but she would not allow him, and I was singled out to induce her to return to Lady Maltravers' protection, or, at least, bring such intelligence as should prove that Grif had not been uttering base falsehoods. When this point was arranged, Grif tried to get hold of me, but I studiously avoided him, and to better accomplish not meeting him, I told Sir John that I would not answer for the success of my mission if Grif was not kept in sight while I was gone. Sir John secured me from the possibility of Grif's interference, by confining him in a dungeon; and away I started. I soon reached the convent, and was ushered into the presence of Editha a short time after I got there; she looked thin and pale, I thought, but much more calm and placid than when at Berkeley Castle. I was kindly greeted by her, and then I unfolded the purport of my visit, but she was deaf to all persuasion of return. While arguing with her, using such reasons as I could to persuade her, it entered my head that she might quit the dull convent and yet not return to the castle, and I asked at the moment, if she were to take the veil whether Sir John could molest her. 'He dare not,' she replied. 'Then,' said I, suppose you were to quit this place with me, for some place far from here, which no one but ourselves can know anything about; you will be beyond the reach of discovery, and I shall most likely be able to ascertain where your husband is. I will let him know where you are, and then he can join you, and you can go where or do what you please.' 'It was with some such story as this, that the monster, William Ogle, deceived me,' she replied; 'I will not trust another: I am comparatively happy here with my poor sister, and were I to quit I should probably make my situation worse. I thank thee, good Ulph, for thy kind offer, but will not avail myself of it.' I, however, still persisted, and argued with such good effect, that she consented, providing her sister accompanied her; I made no objection whatever, and she left me to bring her sister to me, to make her acquainted with my proposition."

"She had not then taken the veil?"

"No! She came—I was struck with the remarkable likeness between the two sisters—even to the lines which grief had made visible, but I did not lose time in stopping to observe that, but at once urged her to quit. She had no desire to leave, and would not have done so, but that she saw in Editha a strong desire to comply with my suggestion, for there was yet a chance and hope that she would meet you——"

"And did they leave? I cannot curb my impatience to hear all the little incidents connected with their departure; answer me at once—did they leave?"

"They did!"

"And you did not persuade them to quit with the purpose of betraying them?"

"As heaven is my judge, no!"

"You were not interrupted in your escape, good Ulph?"

"No! I hit upon a place where for a week they lay concealed, while I returned to the castle to say in a fit of grief she had taken the veil. Sir John would scarcely believe me, and would himself have gone to see; but he was attainted by Edward of Caernarvon for high treason just at this time, and so I procured leave of absence and went to Editha's and her sister's hiding place, and conveyed them safely to a village far westward from Berkeley, situated somewhat like Brenchley, in the midst of a long straggling weald: there they have remained, I have reason to believe, ever since—"

"What is the name of the village?"

"It has no name."

"No name? impossible!"

"It has not; but it is close by Troll Hill, in the west of the Forest of Dean. I know where it stands exactly, and can guide or direct you thither."

"It is well. What is your reason for supposing that Editha and her sister are still there?"

"You shall hear. Upon my return to the castle, I found Sir John had been imprisoned, and that Grif was released; the latter hunted me out, and by threats and violence obtained from me that I knew almost all that had occurred between you, Sir John, and Editha; he compelled me to tell, as he thought, all I knew; but I only related a garbled tale, and he was as far from the truth as ever; but what I knew was too much for me to know. And I was as able as him to get a reward at any future time, if one should be forthcoming, unless he prevented it; my

silence, he argued, could only be purchased by my death, or by keeping me by his side, and as he affectionately said, we were children by the same mother, it would go a little against his conscience to kill me; therefore he would always have me in his sight. One night—it was midnight, regardless of all my conjurings, my prayers, he bound me, placed me upon his steed, and galloped off with me; he enlisted in the army, making me do so, swearing that if I exhibited the slightest reluctance or an attempt to escape, he would bury his knife in my heart: I was compelled to obey. When we quitted the army we went to the forest of Dean, and though there at least four years, I had no opportunity of seeing Editha and Ghita, until just before I quitted to come here, and that arose through Grif sending me upon a spy's duty close by; I took the chance, sought them, met with, and found them comparatively happy."

"Heaven be praised! How long is this since?"

"About two years."

"There is Wat Tyler, waving his hand," suddenly exclaimed Leowulf.

"I am ready," exclaimed the stranger. "Friend smith, lead this good fellow to your dwelling; treat him kindly until I come to thee."

"His news is good," said Leowulf, "and true, if I read your looks aright."

"It is most important, and if all truth, he is a worthy friend, who has had hard trials to endure through the unhappy events which have occurred to me; lead him hence, and show him every kindness."

"I will. Come along, friend cowherd. Ho, ho! you shall not say that a man beneath the roof of Leowulf the smith ever lived in or left it fasting." So saying, he led Ulph away.

"Now, God nerve my heart for this meeting!" cried Ethelbert; and pressing his hand to his breast, as if to repress the violent beatings of his heart, took his way to Halbert Evesham's cottage.

CHAPTER XIX.

"A something, light as air—a look,
A word unkind or wrongly taken—
Oh! love, that tempests never shook,
A breath, a touch like this hath shaken."

T. MOORE.

"—— he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro; anon
He sate him down, * * *
* * * * then lean'd
His bow'd head on his hands, and shook as 'twere
With a convulsion."

BYRON.

"Let your fair eyes and gentle wishes go with me to my trial; wherein if I be foiled, there is but one shamed that was never gracious; if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so: I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to lament me; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing; only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty."

As You Like It.—SHAKSPERE.

"Fare thee well! and if for ever,
Still for ever fare *thee well!*"

BYRON.

WAT TYLER hastened to Halbert's dwelling to fulfil the task which he had promised Ethelbert to perform, and also to bid Violet farewell, preparatory to his departure after Michael. *The space from* the wood to the cottage was quickly passed over, and as he reached the door he perceived that it was open, and heard, at the same moment, Halbert's voice uttering words in a tone of deep feeling, approaching solemnity. He paused, and heard matter which induced him to approach the threshold of the door, and slightly started as he saw Violet upon her knees at Halbert's feet, while he, with outstretched hands and uplifted eyes, was pouring forth a blessing upon her, and spoke thus:—

"May He who watches over the smallest and meanest thing in nature, with the tenderest care and solicitude, guide and guard thee in thy path through this world of sorrow and care, tempering thy acts with His infinite wisdom and with His beneficence, making thy way pleasant and happy while on earth thou dost remain, and may He waft thy spirit hereafter to realms of eternal bliss: His blessing be upon thee now and for ever, as mine is, thou dearly beloved child, and earnestly do I pray that mine may be fulfilled entirely and completely. In this conflict of thy heart—this painful strife between love and duty which oppresses and grieves thee—mayest thou be so directed as to be, in thy decision, restored to thy happiness. Thy affection for the youth is not misplaced, I am well assured. He is in all things, save position, every way worthy of thy love and esteem — gentle and kind and virtuous in peace, courageous and noble when those qualities are called for. He loves you, you tell me, with his whole soul, and I am so firmly grounded in his possession of unsullied honour that I feel not the faintest tinge of doubt he would in any manner take advantage of thy love to deceive or do thee wrong. Thus far, dear Violet, only can I counsel thee. Thou hast acknowledged thou dost love him, even as he loves thee, but fearest to let him know it; because, in the event of the discovery of thy parents—for again I solemnly repeat I know them not, nor have the most distant imagining concerning their title or position — they might not look upon him with thy eyes, separate thee, plunge thee both into misery, and estrange thy heart from those whom thou lookest forward to meet and love with such earnestness, making that a calamity thou dost now so eagerly wish to transpire. To counsel thee in a case like this, Violet, is a vain task. Act only as thy judgment dictates to thee—as thy heart, for that is the truest counsellor, shall impel thee. If thou shouldst decide to confess thy love, and betroth thyself to the youth, and when this is done, and thou hast discovered thy parents, they should seek against thy strong inclining, against his and thine happiness, to change thee, and act harshly to thee, inducing thee to wish thyself once more an orphan, there will ever be my roof to receive and shelter thee, to restore to thee thy old frame of mind, the pleasant time thou hast passed beneath it, and these arms to enfold and cherish thee from ill——"

"My dear, dear father!" sobbed Violet.

"Arise, dearest, and weep not. There, pillow thy sweet head upon my shoulder. When thou hast found thy parents, they cannot love thee more than I do; and fear not they will love thee less. They have but to know the prize they possess to love thee as I do. So, so, repress thy tears, my love — think no more upon this struggle. There is plenty of time, my child, plenty of time. Stay until thou hast become more calm, and canst look upon the case more coolly——"

"But oh, dear father!" interrupted Violet in a low but anxious tone, "think of poor Flora's situation. What if my conduct, my vacillation, should have the same effect? How could I ever forgive myself for having made the kindest heart that ever beat in human

breast ache with unceasing agony, for aye, make its possessor an exile from all he loves and holds dear, from those who no less love him?"

Wat felt his heart beat nearly to suffocation as Violet concluded her speech. Could she allude to him? Who else could she allude to but him, speaking thus? Sir Walter Manny? No! it was impossible! The terms she spoke in had direct reference to him, and to him only. Sir Walter Manny could be no exile from England, for he was a native of Hainault; besides, Halbert had spoken of the youth of whom they were conversing, as only unworthy of Violet in position—that was not Sir Walter's case; and how often had Violet said to him, that he, Wat, bore the kindest heart in the world? And did she, then, love him, after all his doubts—did she really love him? Oh! what happiness was in the thought, when the tenor of the words he had just heard ran through his mind, and seemed to reply affirmatively. His impulse was at once to advance, and pour out a passionate flow of thanks; but the word "position" suddenly rose up in his mind, like a dark spectre, clouding the bliss which the moment previous pervaded his whole frame. It caused him to writhe for a moment—it was but a moment—for his chest expanded and swelled, and he as instantly muttered—

"I *will* carve a position for myself, one which even Sir Walter Manny might be proud to own. Edward promotes and rewards highly gallant hearts; and mine shall be steel against all fear or danger, while an honour is to be plucked, even from the jaws of death. Now, more than ever, am I resolved upon my course, and I will have the laurel or the cypress."

He did not wait to hear the reply of Halbert to Violet, but entered the cottage. The noise of his approach caused them to turn their heads, and no sooner was he recognised than the greeting he received was, he fancied — in all probability it was not fancy— warmer than usual from both, especially from Violet, who pressed his hands and looked up in his face with her beautiful, kind, blue eyes, with more fervour than she had scarce ever shown before. He would have given worlds that moment to have clasped her to his heart, but he restrained his feelings, and returning the pressure, said—

"I have come to take farewell of thee, Violet. I quit Brenchley within an hour, and by to-morrow noon I shall, I hope, be with Michael."

"Indeed, dear Wat, I hope you will," replied Violet, "and succeed in bringing him back to us again; for, as I fear, Flora's mind is wandering. She is in a sad state; her mother is now with her. Poor Flora! she is conscious of nothing save Michael's departure."

"Depend upon me, dear Violet; I will let no opportunity pass—nothing untried to bring him back. Poor Flora, should the worst ensue, and he returns not, I trust she will have enough strength of mind to reconcile her to her situation, and carry her through the trial safely."

"She has little or no strength of mind," uttered Violet, shaking her head mournfully, "and I dread the consequences of your ill-success."

"But you will cheer her, my love," observed Halbert. "Argue with her, and employ such sentiments as will fortify her mind to bear whatever stroke of fortune it may be the will of heaven to inflict. We are all liable to be separated from those we love by unforeseen circumstances, but it follows not that we should therefore never meet again, or that during the absence harm should come to either more than while in each other's presence."

"Thou sayest truth," cried Wat, catching eagerly at the sentiment, for it so well suited his own case, and speaking rapidly. "Oh, Violet, impress that strongly upon her; tell her that though he may not come back with me in a day or so, that he will come back; that I will stake my life, and honour, which is dearer, that he will come back. Suppose it my case, Violet—at least, I mean not that we should part through the same cause, but that circumstances should arise making it essential that we should part for a time—you, Violet, you would have too much strength of mind to suffer my absence to affect you; you would not believe, because I was away, that I should never return, or that during my absence I could change—could for one moment forget you—or that I should cease at any time doing all in my power to make myself more worthy of you. Michael, I am satisfied, will do the same, should he be unable to return; and if you will employ the eloquence which is thine, and imbue her with the firmness with which you would meet such an occurrence, I am sure she will soon recover, and bear whatever is to be patiently."

"I will do all that thou dost wish me, dear *brother*," observed Violet, looking him in the face with a slight smile and a look of meaning.

Had an arrow passed through his heart, his sudden quiver of agony could not have been greater. He turned as white as ashes. She had only intended it as a jest—a little sportive word to remind him that his last speech savoured rather more of the lover than the brother—the character he had assumed in his connection with her, and had expressed his resolve of supporting under all circumstances. It was not that she reminded him of this because she wished him to believe she looked upon him in the light of a brother only, but to raise a smile in him—to show him how soon he experienced the superiority of love over all ties—how the heart would shine out notwithstanding the restraints imposed on it. There was nothing real in it—nothing meant; but he misconstrued it. It flashed like lightning, and as searingly, through his brain, that she had intended it to make him remember that he was no more than a brother to her—a brother, and nothing beyond it. She would look upon his absence only in such light, and therefore his comparison between himself and Michael, in order to prepare her for his intended quittal of Brenchley for the army, was next to nothing—uncalled-for, unnecessary. Had it been possible for a sudden revulsion of feeling to have killed him, his heartstrings at the shock would have snapped like threads. Violet in an instant detected the change, and said earnestly—

"What is the matter, dear Wat? How pale you have turned: are you ill?"

"No—no!" he exclaimed, hurriedly. "I—I—it is nothing: a sudden spasm. I shall be better instantly. It will have soon passed away."

"You have not recovered the effects of your wound."

"Oh, yes! such a wound as *that* is not worth mentioning; my time is growing short; with your permission I will communicate something of importance to both——"

"Indeed!" cried Halbert. "Pray speak, Wat."

"Nay," said Violet, who felt pained to witness Wat's ashiness and evident uneasiness of manner—a sadness being impressed upon his features, as though some stunning, frightful news had just been conveyed to him—"nay, recover thyself first, dear Wat, I am sure thou'rt ill; thy face, thy manner betoken it. When thou didst enter, there was a smile on thy lips, a ruddiness on thy cheeks: they have both fled. You are not well."

"I am quite well enough, Violet, to tell you this matter, and then I will instantly away."

Violet in her turn felt a pang dart through her frame. She had never heard Wat speak in so cold a tone to her before. She bowed her head without uttering a word, but the tears rushed to her eyes ready to blind her; she had no time to imagine the cause for this change, when Wat commenced—

"You have heard already, Halbert, respecting the stranger, who so singularly mixed himself up with us in opposing Grif?"

"I have—Violet has told me all."

"You are, then, aware that he told me a tale respecting you and Violet?"

"I am, and feel anxious to learn from you more respecting him."

"Can you form any guess who he is?"

"Not until I know what he told thee."

"Are there many persons who know all the particulars of your history?"

"Not any, that I am aware of, beside myself."

"Not one?"

"Wat Tyler, what mean you? My breast is agitated strongly. Dost *thou* know who this stranger is?"

"I do. He is one who wishes much to hold thee once more in his arms—one whom you knew years ago, and loved most dearly."

"Knew years ago? His name!—Wat, his name!"

"Thou hast heart and strength to meet him, if I mention his name?"

"Oh, Heavens! can it be he? Speak, Wat—I have strength to meet him, let him be who he may, even if it be——"

"Ethelbert Evesham!"

"Oh, God! my brother!" Halbert sunk into a chair as he uttered this. Both Wat and Violet flew to him, but he waved them off, and, after the lapse of a minute, asked, "Is he here?"

"He is," replied Wat; "a wave of my hand will bring him to the cottage. Shall I bid him come?"

"Wait but a few moments, until I have calmed down the rush of blood to my heart which the sudden, unlooked-for intelligence has created. I cannot remember the terrible circumstances which caused our separation—events which the mention of his name bring so forcibly to my memory—without feeling the deepest agitation. He bears, I most strongly expect, intelligence I have for years expected to receive—intelligence which may add to or dispel entirely the gloom which has enshrouded my thoughts and acts for so long a period. Hold, my heart! how thou dost pant and throb! Dost thou not feel, Violet, as though some great change for thee was at hand?"

"Indeed I do," returned Violet, gazing stedfastly but sorrowfully at Wat, who marked the look, but turned his eyes to the ground, to Violet's pained conception, with a coldness of manner greater than he had before assumed. The reason for this she could not understand. It was to her perfectly incomprehensible why he, who had always under all circumstances been so fervid in words and deeds, should thus, without as she could discover the slightest cause, change to such an iciness of manner: it chilled her blood.

She felt bewildered—could think of nothing else. She heeded not what further her foster-father said to him—his extraordinary alteration of manner engrossed her entire thoughts. There was an agonised sense thronging through her brain of having unconsciously done something to wound his feelings bitterly; but what it was she could not imagine, although she rapidly traced each word, everything, which had transpired since he had entered the cottage, and could rest on *nothing which, in her opinion,* justified this change in his demeanour. Had he overheard the colloquy between herself and Halbert, and found in it matter to wound his pride? No; for when he returned her greeting, she could tell by his flushed face, his brilliant eyes, and the fervent pressure of his hands, that there existed no estrangement—that the cause of this sudden coolness had arisen since his entrance. What, then, could it be?

It was in vain that she twisted and turned each thought, each act, each word. There was not a point upon which she could dwell to elucidate the mystery. She did not alight on the right cause; for she had uttered what she deemed a jest, thought of it as such, had uttered it in the tone of one, and when in the course of her reflections it had recurred to her, it was dismissed as nothing more.

Why, then, had he so suddenly, so uneasedly, turned from fire to ice? Why did he turn from her with an air almost of dislike? Why did he speak in a tone of coolness? What had occasioned all this? Why had he dwelled so emphatically upon the words "such a wound as *that*," as if alluding to some other wound whose infliction was nearly death to him? She would at once have asked him to put every other consideration on one side and grant an explanation of his behaviour, but there was no opportunity of doing so, for not having given him that she was aware the smallest reason for it, she felt that she could not—had no right to take notice of it.

While buried in reflection upon this painful subject she had removed her eyes from him, gazing vacantly upon the clear sky through the open doorway, but now she turned them again upon him. The whiteness which had induced her to notice the change in him had passed away, and a strong flush had taken its place, yet his features were calm even to rigidity. She knew this was not natural—was assumed, but she felt it painfully strengthened the idea she conceived, that whatever had hurt him was something of a nature deep and powerful. His gravity, his measured speeches, totally unlike his usual manner, were so striking, that even Halbert must have noticed the change, had he not been so much agitated by the expected meeting of his long-estranged brother. Twenty times the question rose to Violet's lips, to ask him why he acted thus; but in one sense her pride prevented her, and secondly, Wat so studiously avoided looking towards her, that she could not even by a look make him perceive she was conscious of and hurt by his conduct. She unheedingly heard him preparing her foster-father to meet Ethelbert; she knew he was using kind words, cheering arguments, awakening bright hopes of future happiness, but they fell upon her ear uncared for; it was not Wat's old tone of voice—there was nothing of the rich softness, the old familiar music of his tones, which told his heart vibrated at every word he uttered—the tone he had ever held to her. It was quite changed—it seemed as though a stranger was speaking his words, and the altered sound made them grate harshly upon her ear—grate where they had ever fallen so pleasantly. How many times she asked herself "why is this?" only to fail in finding an answer. She felt that she could not bear it much longer—that the moment an opportunity occurred she would know the reason which induced him to exhibit this change. As she came to this resolution, she saw him quit the cottage, saw him pass the window, and she was left with her foster-father alone. Her heart throbbed violently—she became faint and cold; but making a hard struggle, she turned to Halbert, and said in a tone of considerable excitement—

"Wat—Wat is gone! Why—where is he gone?

He has not yet gone to London, dear father, has he?"

Halbert, who was sitting with his face pale and

covered by one hand, returned no reply, save a wave of the hand, which seemed to request her silence; and this slight act added to her alarm. She had forgotten everything respecting Ethelbert; remembered only the one absorbing theme—that Wat's heart was suddenly turned against her—that he had quitted without explanation, without farewell. Tears rushed to her eyes—her bosom heaved and fell—her throat swelled, and pained her with emotion. She went hastily to the

door, as if with the intention of following him, when the sound of returning footsteps caught her ear. She heard Halbert spring to his feet, and she looked like lightning for the comer, but her eyes were blinded with water. She dashed the thronging tears from her eyelids, and saw Wat enter. He advanced to Halbert, and said—

"Prepare thyself, my dear friend—he is coming. Remember what I have said. He is well—unhurt in all his dangerous exploits. He brings thee good news, and he is quite prepared to meet thee as he will find thee. And now, I know you will excuse my presence—the time for my departure has arrived. I—I am unequal to witness such a meeting as thine will be, and therefore you will, I know, suffer me to bid thee farewell now. I will return as soon as it is possible for me to accomplish it, bringing, I trust, my friend Michael with me. Farewell, my good, kind friend—may every moment of thy future life teem with entire happiness."

"Farewell, my dear boy," replied Halbert, with enthusiasm; "farewell. Mayst thou be successful, for the sake of all. The blessing of the Holy Virgin be upon thee! in all thy deeds and undertakings, may she guide and prosper thee through a long life!"

Wat bowed his head without making a response, and then advanced to Violet, whose heart leaped within her as he approached—upon whose lips there was a gush of words to remove any impression upon his mind that she had said or done aught to hurt his feelings—whose eye beamed on him with a glance he could not have mistaken had he seen it: but he did not, his own were firmly bent downwards, nor did he once raise them to look upon her face. She shrunk with a pang of agony as she observed this. She felt his hand take hers passively; it was stone cold, while hers burnt with the fever of excitement; she knew that his arm quivered as he felt her burning touch. She could trace, too, beneath the cold composed features the workings of the spirit within. He spoke—it was in the same tone which had before chilled her.

"Violet," he said, "farewell! I need not repeat that such endeavours as I can use to bring Michael back to Flora, I will; but in the event of my proving unsuccessful, which I trust I shall not, I will myself return as early as circumstances will permit and acquaint you with the result of my journey, and also to take my farewell of you for a longer period. I hear Ethelbert's footstep approaching; my time is come—farewell."

Violet would have given worlds to have uttered a single word, had it only been his name, but she had not power—she felt suffocating—the place seemed swimming round with her—her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth—she could not force out a sound. Wat had held her hand coldly in his, had stood like marble while he spoke, although there were emotions raging in his frame almost sufficient to shatter it; he waited a moment to hear her reply—none came, and he was about to let her hand fall as carelessly as he held it; but his feelings got the better of him, he pressed it convulsively with both hands, and rushed out of the room—his figure darkened the window for an instant, and then he was gone. Violet sunk upon a chair, overpowered by her feelings; she pressed her fingers passionately to her brain, gazed wildly round her, but neither wept nor uttered a word, although she panted hysterically. At this moment Ethelbert entered; Halbert turned towards him with outstretched arms, and in an instant his brother was locked in his warm embrace—"My brother! dear *Ethelbert!*" being the only words heard; each was affected to tears. Ethelbert was the first to recover; he had so long schooled himself to exercise a perfect mastery over his feelings, that it was not long ere he found himself equal to hold a conversation upon topics which Halbert found it even painful to remember.

"At length, dear Halbert, after a lapse of so many years, we again meet," exclaimed he, "never again, I hope, to part, at least for any length of time, until death separates us for ever. The miserable events which sundered us, which turned us both heartbroken from our birthplace, are, with their evil consequences, worked out. Wrong hath been revenged so completely, that they can no longer, save by sad remembrances, disturb the tranquillity with which, I trust, we shall spend the remainder of our days. Why, how now, Halbert? still thy shaking frame! Look up; look upon my features—thou wilt see that though years have divided us, that though my life has been one of toil, of danger, of incessant excitement, the hard lines of care and bitterness show not as thou mightest expect to see them, in remembering all I have undergone: and why is this? because I have not suffered myself to be bowed to the earth by a weakness of feeling which, though under the circumstances natural, would have lost what I have gained—obtained with untiring perseverance, with unslumbering vigilance, it is true, but *it is obtained*. Halbert, tremendous as have been our wrongs, *they are* revenged! Think of that, and dash those tears from thy quivering lids; exert thy strength of mind, shake off this womanly weakness, and be, as thou art in all things else, a man. Tush! Halbert: were thou a young timid damsel, thy frame could not tremble more than now it does. Why, here hast thou passed a life of ease and placidity, save the inquietude occasioned by painful recollections, nought to disturb the even tenor of thy way; while I have spent one in which rest, except what nature imperatively demanded, was a thing unfeasible, unlooked for. Now, Halbert, the energy required for such an existence, which I was compelled ever to employ, I know dwells in thee, though not being called upon has kept it dormant. Rouse it, use it, and look upon our reunion with a steady eye and a firm tongue. I know of nought which should not make it one of gladness to both—one for smiles, not for tears; therefore, my dear brother, cast this weakness from thee, and be as I now am to thee."

"I confess my weakness," murmured Halbert; had I passed such a life as I can judge you have done, I doubt not that I could have met you with the same firmness you have shown, but it is the very quiet one I have passed, enabling me to brood over my bitter loss, the estrangement from all—except one gentle child—that I ever loved, which has destroyed the strength of character it would have become me to have evinced. Thy sudden appearance has so powerfully recalled the intense anguish of spirit I suffered when we were last together, coupled with the vivid remembrance of its heart-rending cause, that I have not the power to restrain the feelings in which it appears to you so weak to indulge."

"My dear Halbert!" exclaimed Ethelbert quickly, "I quarrel not with the feeling—it is an evidence of a kindly heart. There is no shame in being affected to tears in any case where our better feelings should be displayed; it is only the giving way to it which renders it a weakness. But let us talk no more thus, we have much of considerable importance to relate to each other; let us think upon these subjects, and suppose that our parting took place but yesterday. Where is Violet? I am very desirous of speaking to

one of whom I have so much heard, so little seen—of whom I have so often thought, and who is so strangely connected with our sad destiny."

"She is here," replied Halbert, turning round suddenly, to find that Violet had quitted the room. The chair upon which she was sitting when Ethelbert entered the room was vacant—he had not seen her depart, but concluded that she had returned to the bedside of Flora, where she had passed nearly all the preceding part of the day, while his attention was engrossed by his brother's arrival. "She was here a moment since," he continued, upon perceiving her absence, "but I suppose has retired up stairs to a sick friend; I will call her to you."

"Stay—not yet, do not disturb her in her kind office. I am acquainted with the reason of the illness of the maiden above, and would not interfere with the kind ministering of her sweet spirit, where I am sure it is much needed, and will be, I fully believe, most efficacious. I have several things, too, to inform thee, which may be best told while we are alone, and also questions to ask, which may be better answered without the presence of a third person. Doubt not that I am anxious, most anxious to meet her; but I feel it will be better that our meeting should take place after we have each satisfied the other upon the questions thronging to our tongues, than it should be now, when the anxiety which we feel to learn what has transpired during our absence would perhaps make it one of comparative indifference. I would not so wound the sensitiveness I feel assured she possesses, nor do my own wishes so much injustice; therefore, for the present, let her remain above."

"Whatever you think best, Ethelbert, I willingly subscribe to," said Halbert. "It will be better, as you suggest, for I know my impatience to hear what I fully believe you can unfold to me would interfere with the meeting between you and Violet; therefore, my dear brother, recount at once to me the principal events which have occurred to thee since last we parted."

"I will; but all mine will needs be a long story, and part of it why hinge upon thine, I should wish thee to tell me its history before I commence."

"I have little to tell thee; I have lived here sequestered, uninterrupted, and had it not been for past events, I should have been most happy. I have only lately met with any incident which may interest thee to know, and that is a communication from Sir John Malravers—from the villain who so deeply injured thee!"

"Communicate with thee—why, Halbert, he knew thee not! What was his purpose in communicating with thee?"

"Thou shalt hear. In consequence of some intelligence which Sir John received from one whom I know not in this neighbourhood, he imagined that I was you, and sent a distant relative, one Martin du Bois, to me."

"Distant relative!" echoed Ethelbert scornfully—"it was his only son."

"What, he—the wretch who sought to slay me, Martin du Bois, his son?"

"He is, or was: for if I mistake not, he no longer lives. But how mean you, he sought to slay you?"

Halbert related all that the reader is already acquainted with, drawing from his brother many exclamations of bitterness; and when he had finished, Ethelbert exclaimed—

"The scoundrel has been well punished for his villany. Now tell me what was his purport in visiting you?"

"He bore an offer to me to an effect I could scarce understand; he had, as I tell you, ascertained that I—or rather you, as he thought—lived here, and he proffered the following terms and conditions:—He would pay any sum of money you might demand, restore your wife to you even as uncontaminated as she quitted you; if you would forego your vindictive pursuit of him, and restore to his family the daughter which you had years since stolen from him while she was an infant."

"Ha! then he did lose a child?"

"Of course—is not Violet that child?"

"No! but proceed; you shall know of that hereafter."

"You astonish me; from the first moment Martin du Bois brought me the communication, I concluded that she was the child whom, out of revenge, you had abstracted. You had never told me who she was, and it was natural, from the circumstances which had taken place, I should come to such a conclusion. Who are her parents, Ethelbert?"

"I cannot tell thee; I have heard some strange things respecting her recently, which renders her birth still a matter of great mystery; however, I hope very speedily to elucidate it. Did Martin verbally communicate Sir John's proposition to you?

"No; he brought me a sealed packet, with whose contents, upon questioning him, I discovered he was unacquainted. At first I fancied his ignorance was assumed, but afterwards I found it was real, and I tried with much perseverance to ascertain whatever I could from him, respecting his father and the position of his family, but he was taciturn, or affected to know more than he really did. The raking up of the miserable incidents made me feel very low spirited; and after each visit he paid me, when I found that despite the tact with which my questions were put, I could obtain nothing to give me any case respecting you, or in any way allay the burning curiosity which possessed me, I felt almost inclined to give way to despair, and quit a life which memory made a burden to me."

"Thou must have been indeed prostrate-minded to have had such a thought even cross thy brain, Halbert; however, the evil I trust has passed away, and thou mayst yet be happy."

"Never" Ethelbert, never—beyond what now I am."

"Be not too hasty; you may alter your tone when you have heard all I can tell thee; remember, it is not because it appears impossible that an event should transpire, that it therefore should not come to pass. Be prepared to expect thou mayest yet be happy in the way thou canst most wish——"

"Ethelbert! knowest thou—hast thou seen—is it to Ghita you allude?"

"Thou shalt know all anon; the goodness of God is great. Those whom he bows down with affliction he upraises again. Be satisfied, he will not overlook thee."

"Is it of Ghita you would speak?—I am sick and faint. Speak, dost thou know what became of her?"

"Not only what became of her, but where she is!"

"Where—where she is! Oh, gracious Heaven support me—she is alive! May I—*can* I once more enfold her in my embrace—speak, Ethelbert—tell me? my brain whirls and my heart throbs as though it would burst. Speak, Ethelbert—tell me; let me know the worst or best at once."

"Calm thyself, Halbert—hope for the best; she does live, and I have the firmest hope thou *canst* take her again to thy bosom, and be happy once more."

"Holy Mother of God! grant my prayer that we may."

"Amen! You shall presently hear the whole incidents connected with her discovery; but first

answer me, hast thou yet the packet which Martin du Bois brought thee?"

"Assuredly I have; I have carefully preserved it, expecting that a time might come when it would prove serviceable."

"Let me have it, it will prove serviceable, and that very shortly."

"You can have it whenever you wish. Now, as I have nothing more to tell you, let me hear thy story, and tell me also why thou didst suffer so long a period to elapse without coming near me or seeing me?"

"I have been near thee almost for two years; I have dwelled in the wood as long; twice out of that time I have been at the threshold of thy door. Once, two nights since, I tracked hither one of the band of Grif—he who must have sent the intelligence of thy being here to Sir John—who, I conclude, came to spy whether the villagers were unprepared for the devilish intentions of Grif; but he only reached this cottage, and seeing the flickering flame of a feeble light in thy window, he glided among the trees close here; I followed him, and stood in the shadow of this cottage, when suddenly Wat Tyler, who was in the room above, called out, having seen one or both of us, and quitted the window in a minute afterwards to search the places which contained us; but the robber waited not for his arrival and glided away; I followed him closely—he never more saw Grif or his band. Last night also I was here, and saved the gentle Violet from a deed of violence about to be perpetrated upon her; thus, you see, I have been near thee: but had I given way to the feelings my heart prompted, I should in all probability have sacrificed the revenge I was upon the eve of accomplishing, and visited thee; but I was so bent upon working out my resolve, body and soul, that to it I sacrificed all human feelings, and made myself what I should once have shuddered to conceive, and, perhaps, may to remember. But you shall judge of me by what you hear."

Ethelbert then seated himself, motioning to his brother to do the same, and related the history of all the events which had occurred to him during their long separation, interweaving so much of Griff's and Ulph's relations as would make the story complete.

Scarcely was it finished when Violet made her appearance. Their meeting was one hardly to be described; each doubting in what light to look upon the other; each believing they were in some way connected by ties of blood, yet questioning it; still their meeting was affectionate, and Violet had the strong hope that if he was not related to her he could give her every information respecting her parents, and therefore his presence was a a matter of great interest to her, independent of that which she would naturally feel for the brother of her foster-father. Extreme as was her desire to hear him speak of her birth, her history, her parents, not a word dropped from her respecting them; but a topic arose which interested her as deeply, if not more deeply, than if she had been listening to a recital of her parentage. It was upon Wat Tyler. She heard his praises warmly uttered by her foster-father; she heard them, with a swelling heart, echoed by Ethelbert; she heard his deeds lauded by the latter as surpassing those of a gallant heart, years his senior; she heard his mind, his person, highly commended, and her bosom glowed as she felt how well he deserved all they were repeating of him. When Ethelbert entered she had stolen away to weep at the altered manner of Wat. It was with difficulty she could so far compose herself as to return and meet him, and now when these kind and handsome things were being said of one she knew to be in no way unworthy of them, who had been unequalled in his kindness to her, and who she remembered with so much pain had parted coldly from her, evidently wounded to the core by some act of hers, she felt as if her heart would break. She strove to conceal the tears which gushed to her eyes, and making some slight excuse retired to pour forth unobservedly the bitterness of her feelings.

Wat Tyler, in the meanwhile, with an oppressed heart, returned to his home. He had been stung to agony by a word never meant to hurt him. In his first paroxysms of anguish, he felt as though he could dash himself from some high place, that life might be crushed out of him, as happiness was from his heart. His brain was in a whirl; he scarce knew how to endure himself. He was unconscious of everything around him. Through his mind there thronged undefined visions of throwing away his life, without one effort to save it, the first engagement it might be his lot to enter after he had joined Sir Walter Manny's troop. As that name crossed him, a hot flush passed over his brow, with a determination, muttered through grinding teeth, that whatever did Sir Walter, he would outdo him in the deed. His chest burned as if an inward fire was consuming him; his mouth was parched; he would have been overjoyed to have encountered some enemy in his path, some bitter foe, some wretch, some "Grif of the Bloody Hand," upon whom he could wreak all the force of the tortured feelings he was then suffering. In this frame of mind he reached his home, and encountered, pale and ghastly, almost in a swooning condition, reclining upon a large chair, being attended by his mother, Martin du Bois. He started, then advanced, exclaiming fiercely—

"How came this wretch here?"

"Wretch! What mean you, Wat?" ejaculated his mother with surprise; "this cavalier, wounded almost to death by Grif of the Bloody Hand, was brought here by Canute the smith, who told me, Leowulf, his master, had sent him hither with his charge, begging us to show him such hospitality as lay in our power. Thou knowest, Wat, that we deny it to none—certainly not to one wounded and helpless; therefore I did receive him, with the promise of ministering to his wounds, and attending carefully to his hurts. Why, how strangely thine eyes glare, Wat! Thy face is pale and haggard. What means that frowning look of hate you bend upon this poor helpless creature? Smooth thy brow, for the love of heaven, my child; it is unlike thee to bear such an aspect. What has happened that you should look thus? Dost thou know this cavalier?"

"Know him, mother? Why, this is the hound who sought to carry off Violet. This is he who caused the bloodshed of last night; who, in the basest, most villanous manner, sought to slay Halbert Evesham. He is an evil-minded scoundrel, whom I have vowed, if ever he again crossed my path, to slay."

"You must be mistaken, Wat; this youth cannot be so wicked as you assert."

"Cannot be? I tell you, mother, this is Martin du Bois, whose very name I execrate; and shall such a dog as he find succour and shelter beneath the roof of my father?"

"Hold, Wat; what would you do?" cried his mother, earnestly, as Wat advanced and seized the powerless Martin by the neckpiece of his cote-hardie.

"Why, hurl him forth from beneath a roof which never yet harboured vice or crime."

"Wat, Wat, stay thy hand—he hath scarce life in him; he will die."

"Why, let him; he who would not hesitate to slay in cold blood those who have befriended him, and even in the hour of peril delivered him from a grievous strait, deserve to meet with a dog's death. This wretch has not exhibited the least redeeming quality—he is coward as well as villain; the son, too, of as great a monster as ever breathed. Our hearth is polluted by his presence—I will cast him forth."

"No, no, Wat—dost thou hear me; unhand him, Wat—am I thy mother?"

"Mother?"

"As I am thy mother, I command thee, take thy hand from him."

"Thy word, mother, is my law. I obey."

"Oh, Wat, that I should ever have had to speak in such a tone to thee, who never until now showed a spirit so vindictive!"

"Forgive me, dear mother, if I forgot what is due from me to thee—but I am not well—I am half mad; I scarce know what I do; the sight of this villain so much exasperated me, that I remembered nothing but the wickedness he had been guilty of—but, mother, will you suffer a wretch to remain *here* who has caused so much bloodshed, and, had he not been prevented, would have perpetrated such a deed of villany as would have wrung your heart with anguish, only to have heard of it."

"Wat, I am sure that he must be great in wickedness, to have made thee act as but now thou didst; but when he was brought in, unknowing who he was or what he had done, I promised shelter and assistance to him: my word is passed, and were he thrice as evil as thou hast described him to be, I would keep my word. He has done wrong, I doubt not, but the hospitality of our house, never yet forfeited, must not be now broken or infringed. While beneath this roof he shall receive every attention I can pay him, that he may be restored to health. When removed from its shelter my duty has ceased; but while here, he must have protection and help, and thou of all persons must not seek to do him hurt, rendering the word I have given valueless."

"Thou art right, dear mother. Villain as he is, I will not step between thee and thy hospitality; when, however, he is again a healthy man, when the faith tendered him beneath this roof has been fulfilled, despite his crimes unbroken,—then will I settle my quarrel with him; until then he is as safe as if he were my brother."

"God bless thee, my child; I was sure when thy excitement had subsided, thou wouldst not swerve from thy duty. But what has made thee so pale? why wert thou so disordered when thou didst first enter?"

"'Twas nothing, mother! I had heard a long, sad story which rather affected me—that is all. I shall depart to London at once—can I assist thee ere I go, by carrying this creature to my bed?"

His mother assented; and lifting Martin in his arms as if he were an infant, he bore him to his chamber and laid him upon his couch, and then, when his services were ended, he returned to the kitchen and prepared to depart.

His mother was very loth to trust him; but he was on a kind errand. His father did not offer to prevent or dissuade him, and Wat was bent upon going; therefore, though she would have done anything rather than assent, if a reasonable pretext would have enabled her to have prevented his journey, she was obliged to give way, and, with many strict injunctions regarding the care he was to take for his personal safety, and accompanied by prayers and blessings, he departed.

He was mounted upon a good steed, and went his way at a good round pace. It was, fortunately, a clear moonlight night, and though his way was intricate, yet he could see everything almost as plainly as if it were daylight, thus rendering the path much easier. He, however, took little notice of his road—he passed through the wood without bestowing a thought upon its late tenants, or the circumstances with which they were connected. There was but the one thought engrossed him, that Violet loved him not—he could think of nothing else, it was in vain to try. Trees were passed rapidly, glades and thickets left behind; now he was galloping through places light with moonlight, now through spots of deep shadow, but they were all unnoticed. He was pursuing the right path, and it was the only thing to which he at any time turned his attention for an instant. His whole soul was engrossed by Violet—what had passed and what might pass rolled swiftly through his mind, to be again and again pondered over. He remembered how dearly they had loved each other as children upwards, even to three short days since; how the dreadful doubt had arisen, been almost confirmed, then as nearly dispelled; to be again renewed with frightful force by her, and with levity, too, when she must have known how even an allusion to it must have pained him. Would he have done so to her? he asked himself—would he have said aught unkind to *her?* would he have done aught to have pained her? No, he would have perished first. Had she taken an example by Flora? No—no; but why had she so lightly reminded him of that which would she might be sure cut him to the soul? He could not understand it; it was so unlike her, so unnatural to her. Every way did he twist and turn it only to come to one conclusion—that his excess of affectionateness had made her fear he would expect she should give him her heart and hand; which, after what he had overheard Halbert utter as he reached their cottage door that afternoon, would have been no unreasonable expectation—and so, regardless of what he might suffer, she had at once acquainted him with the limits beyond which he must not pass. Yet he could not think for any length of time thus harshly of her, and tried to persuade himself he had been too precipitate in judging thus of her. However, he resolved she should have no occasion again to remind him that he was no more than a brother, though the very thought seemed as if it would choke him; but he would ever be kind, ever as he had been—keep her image for ever bright and unsullied in his heart of hearts—be in all things a steadfast friend—and never, never forget her while in his frame one pulse beat.

He gained a considerable distance before he stayed to bait his steed. The morning was just breaking as he entered the yard of a small hostelry. He saw that his steed was well cared for, and then he went and threw himself upon a bed for a couple of hours, but could not sleep. He arose unrefreshed and without suffering anything to pass his lips, at which the host looked rather blank; he went to the stable, had his horse saddled, and once more was on his journey. By ten in the morning he was in London. He waited for nothing, but made instant inquiries for the residence of Sir Walter Manny. It was pointed out to him, and he galloped there; but he was from home, he was at the Tower superintending the embarking of troops. He galloped thither; with great difficulty he obtained admittance; it was only by dint of repeated assertions that he was bound to Sir Walter Manny on matters of the highest importance that he was permitted to pass; soon he was mingling among the

stream of soldiers hurrying to embark on board the transports lying there to convey them to their destination. Amid the crowding of troops, the clangour of arms, the loud voices uttering words of command, the busy hum of hundreds talking and laughing to each other, he was quite bewildered; he tried to shake off the confusion he felt, and repeatedly inquired for Sir Walter Manny, but without getting a satisfactory answer; at last, one of the guards on duty, upon being questioned, directed him, and with his best speed he made for the place; he caught a glimpse of him upon his bouny Tricksy, surrounded by gorgeously attired knights, himself habited in a knight's habiliments, directing the different troops, as they arrived, to their respective vessels. Wat hesitated not a second, but galloped towards him. He had nearly reached him, when his steed was suddenly forcibly checked by a retainer, who seized the bridle, and, calling our hero a churl, asked him for what he was thrusting his clown's pate in such goodly company? Wat's first impulse was to knock him down with a blow of his riding-whip, and proceed on to Sir Walter; but the man was up again quickly, and summoning a party of men to assist him, dashed after him to make him a prisoner; but this was not so easily accomplished. Wat had his sword with him, the one Leowulf had forged and presented him with, and, as he saw a dozen men surround him with presented pikes, he hesitated not to use it. He spurred on his steed, and cut the first one in half, and breasted his horse at a fellow who held another close to the one he had cloven. The horse sprung, and the man, as soon as he perceived him coming, dropped, and the horse went over him. The fellows raised a shout, but Wat had left them behind. An officer leading a small detachment, however, observed the act, concluded Wat to be some one escaping prison, formed his men in a line across the path along which Wat was advancing, and prepared to stop him. Wat grew desperate. He knew they would be regardless, after what had transpired, of anything he could say, and if they captured him, would at once carry him off a prisoner, and put him in a dungeon, without his being able to get speech of Sir Walter. The soldiers were following close behind him, and the man had made a firm stand in front of him. The hubbub they created caused most of the knights to turn and look on with wonder at a youth on horseback thus at bay with the soldiers. Sir Walter Manny's attention was also called to it, and no sooner did Wat see his head turn towards him than he clapped his spurs hard to his horse's sides, put him at the detachment at a tremendous pace, as if it was nothing more than a high fence, cheered the noble animal with his voice, reached them, bounded over them, and in another moment was at Sir Walter's side. There was a great shout raised from all sides. The soldiers rushed after him, and would have dragged him from his horse, but Sir Walter interposed, sent them away, and greeted Wat in a most friendly manner, warmly applauding his recent deed, in which he was echoed by those around him. Wat, however, lost no time in listening to compliments, but at once inquired for Michael, stating at the same time the situation in which he had left Flora, and begged him to exert his influence to restore him to her again. His heart sunk within him as Sir Walter told him that his journey was undertaken in vain; that Michael had arrived with his troopers late the night previous, and in consequence of the sudden departure of all the troops for Sluys, they had embarked at daybreak, and were now far down the river. Michael was with them regularly entered, and such was the want of men, that Edward would not grant the discharge of one, unless totally incapacitated by illness. Wat asked him if there was no hope. The answer was "None!" He saw there was nothing to be gained by harping on the subject, that Michael was irrecoverably gone, and were he to talk until doomsday, it would not alter the state of things; therefore, though he felt deeply his ill success, he said no more about it, but asked Sir Walter when he sailed, and he answered in two days from there, and on the third from Gravesend. He told him he had intended to have sent a special messenger to acquaint him, and then asked him if he still intended joining him; Wat replied that he had firmly made up his mind to do so, and that he would meet him at Gravesend on the third day. Sir Walter agreed to this, and Wat bade him farewell. Just, however, as he departed, one of the knights whispered something to Sir Walter, and he immediately called to Wat to stay, at the same moment he beckoned two of his followers and bade them attend Wat to Tower Hill, and see that he was in no way molested.

"By my faith, friend Wat," he cried, "I had forgotten, until reminded by my friend here, that the party of fellows whom thou didst so gallantly clear, are awaiting thy return to pounce upon thee, and treat thee to a stone bed-chamber, but I will prevent them. Take this ring, Wat, and if they offer to stay thee, show it to them. Fear not, they will respect it, and then keep and wear it for my sake. Farewell, we shall meet again at Gravesend."

Wat bade him farewell; and as Sir Walter had told him, he no sooner had gained a short distance from the knights, than a complete company of soldiers stopped him, requested him instantly to alight, and consider himself their prisoner; but Sir Walter's people stated that they had received orders to see that he was not molested, and Wat showed the ring. Immediately it was seen, the effect was magical. The utmost deference was paid him. He was permitted instantly to depart, and when once more on Tower Hill, the two soldiers left him, and he made his way direct to the hostel where he staid to bait his steed in coming. He reached it, and when there he saw his steed well rubbed down and fed; to the satisfaction of the host, he made a hearty meal, slept a few hours, and then again took his way to Brenchley. It was past midnight when he reached it, and putting his horse carefully in the stable, he entered the cottage and threw himself upon a chair. He slept till daylight. His mother saw him immediately she came down, and he related the ill-success of his journey, and by degrees he told her of his own intention to depart in two days from her, and seek a home and fortune in the world. It would be useless to relate all the entreaties, persuasions, and appeals his mother made to induce him to change his mind. They were all in vain—he remained firm as a rock, even though she went upon her knees to him; albeit, he suffered her not to remain in the position an instant: at length she was compelled to give way to him, and trust to a good and bountiful Providence for his safe and happy return. He kissed her fervently as she came to this conclusion, and for a short time wept like a child upon her neck; but the weakness passed away, and then he prevailed upon her to go to Violet, break out to her his unsuccessfulness, and also his intention of departing from Brenchley the next evening; that he would come then and bid them farewell; he bade her say, that the many arrangements he had to make would prevent his coming before, but he would not fail to come then. She did as he requested her. There was great astonishment displayed by Halbert; none by Ethelbert, for he was already acquainted with

it; and what Violet thought could not be seen, for the instant she heard the message she quitted the room; and though Wat's mother staid a long while hoping to see her, she came not again.

That day passed away tediously to Wat. The arrangements which he had to make, though he had said otherwise, were few and simple, and soon completed. The evening he passed with his parents in quiet but earnest talk, receiving from both such advice as experience alone could give. The morning came; he visited all his friends, and bade them each farewell. When he came to Leowulf and Mark Grayling, they both declared they would accompany him. Mark had nothing he cared for to leave behind; neither had Leowulf, save his forge, and that, he said, he would consign to the charge of a relative. Wat did not attempt to dissuade them, for he felt their company would be a great relief to the sad thoughts which were sure to possess him when he quitted. He then left them to prepare for their sudden departure, and visited all the spots about the little village he had once loved, to look his last upon them for years, perhaps for ever. He at last came to the little bank which he had planted with wild flowers, the bank to which he had led Violet when she first quitted her home after her illness, occasioned by her fall into the flooded stream. What a host of recollections rushed upon him as, pacing restlessly up and down, he gazed upon it. How all the occurrences of the past, blissful in all their bearings, passed in review before him! Again was he battling with the flood: again was he hovering over the pale, calm face, whose placid sleep looked so like death, and murmuring fervent prayers for *her* recovery; again was he walking slowly among the grass and flowers, with her dear form hanging tenderly upon his arm, clinging fondly to him, like a tendril to a young tree; again was he looking with beaming eyes and a throbbing heart, upon the sweet shining face, upturned to his, meeting with a quiet ecstacy the affectionate, dreamy gaze of those soft blue eyes; again was he seated by her side on that flower-studded bank, his arm round her slight waist, her small head reclining gently upon his shoulder, her little hand, with its long taper fingers entwined affectionately in his own, and he unable to give utterance to more than a deep sigh of extreme happiness, though thoughts and words were thronging through his brain to his lips. His heart was full—full almost to bursting. It had been taxed hardly all that day in bidding farewell to many whose friendship he prized, whom he regretted to leave, and who showed the glittering tears, standing in large pearly drops in their eye-lids, as they squeezed his hand, which it might never be their lot to grasp again. His heart was shaken by these repeated evidences of the estimation in which he was held; lower and lower had it been depressed, until he had not strength to trust himself to bid farewell to many to whom he had intended; and now, when sad thought upon sad thought crowded through him, when the very staff upon which he had calculated for support during his absence from England, from *her*, was snatched from him, the strength of mind, the firmness upon which he had calculated on leaving the old place, "the old familiar faces," vanished too, and he was down quite—quite down. He threw himself upon his knees, and with clasped hands buried his face among the flowers on the bank he had dressed with the sweetest plants for *her*, and gave way to a bitter passion of tears. Poor fellow! he might have had the daring—the form of a man—but he had all the rich enthusiasm of a boy's heart; he had none of the cold calculation, or rather pride, which experience gives a man, and helps him to steel his heart against the agony a disappointment like to his inflicts; he had none of this to assist him, he was yet a boy in feeling, and had placed his whole stock of hope—of future happiness—in one venture; it had failed, and he felt beggared of everything which could make life desirable. The flood of tears had their way unchecked; he remained in this position for some time quite prostrated by his anguish. At length words burst from his lips, evidently forced out by the bitterness of his feelings.

"She did love me once—she did love me once!" he cried, passionately. "I am sure she did. How often has she not told me she did, when we were children together. Why should she not now? I have never changed—never in thought even; never turned from *her*—never, never, nor would I—no, not even to save my soul from salvation, sinful as it is to say so. She has always been in my heart the brightest idol; I have always worshipped her. Aye, even when praying to the Virgin it was her I saw—her to whom I prayed. She loved me once, why should she not now? Was I ever unkind to her? She cannot—cannot say I was, even by a look. No, I loved her too dearly, too well to even have one unkind thought of her. Would to God we were little children again, for she did love me then—she did love me then!"

"And does now, Wat—indeed she does, and has never, never ceased to love thee—she calls the Holy Virgin to witness!" uttered a small trembling voice in his ear, thrilling through every nerve in his body. He upraised his bowed head, and saw Violet bending over him, her eyes suffused in tears. In a moment he was upon his feet; he stretched out his arms, and she sunk into them, hiding her weeping face upon his shoulder; with difficulty he stammered forth her name, and questioned why she had come thither. He waited a short time for a reply, and when she could command herself to speak, she said—

"I came hither to seek thee, Wat. Oh, tell me what have I done to cause this change in you? Why have you treated me so coldly? Why are you now about to quit me for ever? Oh, Wat, how have I occasioned this?—tell me, tell me, or my heart will break."

Wat, in an instant, felt he had made some grand mistake, and as instantly cursed the stupidity which had made him deem that careless word was uttered to pain him; he felt ashamed to tell her, and for a few minutes hesitated how to act, and at length replied,

"Dear Violet, no act of thine has induced me to quit Brenchley or thee. Before the thought ever entered my head that thy heart was estranged—"

"It never was, Wat—never," interrupted Violet, earnestly.

"Well, I will only say, that ere I discovered you loved me but as a brother, I had resolved to seek an opportunity of making myself more worthy of you than I should be as I at present stand; and knowing no way offering such prospects as the army, where success is rewarded with honours, I resolved to enter it, and have done so, quitting my home—and thee, Violet—to join it."

"But why, ere thou didst depart for poor Michael, wert thou so cold to me, even to freezing the blood in my veins? And why didst thou not, as at any other time thou wouldst have done, come on thy return to me, instead of studiously keeping from me, making me wretched—almost heart-broken."

"Dear Violet, it is useless to disguise my feelings from thee. Thou knowest how entirely I love thee—that in all things I consider thy happiness far be-

yond my own—that if thou didst love me only as a brother, I would not seek to distress or annoy you by desiring more. Thou knowest I would not. But why remind me of it, as when last we met you did, even as though you feared my selfishness would outstrip my justice?"

"Oh, Wat! banish from your mind all thoughts that it was more than a jest, uttered in the fulness of heart,—it was nothing more. And now a time has arrived which makes further concealment on my part criminal. Wat, dear Wat! companion of my earliest, my happiest hours!—thou kindest friend that ever friend could proudly boast of!—I love thee dearly and truly—more than ever brother was loved, do I love thee!" Her voice faltered, and some following words were inaudible, but Wat was scarce in a condition to hear them; the revolution of mind which a few minutes had produced was more than he could bear, and for a few minutes he was quite overpowered. When he recovered himself, he said in a low voice to Violet, who was sobbing on his breast—to which, in the first joyous moments her confession had created, he had rapturously pressed her.

"And what I overheard Halbert say to thee, when, entering the cottage two days since, I saw him blessing thee, was the reason which impelled thee to say thou didst love me only as a brother, and made me think Sir Walter Manny had thy heart?"

"It was, dear Wat," answered Violet.

Wat pressed her again to his heart, and then they seated themselves upon the little bank, and conversed with low but impassioned words, and an hour passed away, and they had moved not; but at last they knelt down face to face, and swore to love each other through all changes, and never alter or swerve from their love, come what might. Then and there Wat whispered his farewell words to her, then upraised his clasped hands to heaven with a prayer of earnest heart for her entire happiness, whilst she, with one arm round his neck, hid her face in her disengaged hand, and "wept a rain of sorrows" at his words; and he strove to cheer her, and led her to her home. He bade Halbert and Ethelbert adieu, one which none of them bade unmoved. He left the cottage. He would see Violet once more before he left. Then came the parting with his mother. His father bore it manfully, but his mother—she, poor creature, was borne away fainting, and almost broken-hearted. Then again he saw Violet: that parting was terrible, and though none were to have known it, he was compelled to bear her, in a death-like swoon, to her foster-father's arms, and with one long-impassioned kiss he tore himself away. Leowulf and Mark Grayling were waiting for him, and a band of villagers, his old friends, mustered to see him on his way. He quitted Brenchley; was next morning at Gravesend; and before the sun had set, was sailing on the expedition to Sluys.

End of Book I.

WAT TYLER.

"That the honourable enterprises, noble adventures, and deeds of arms performed in the wars between England and France, may be properly related, and held in perpetual remembrance—to the end that brave men, taking example from them, may be encouraged in their well-doing, I sit down to record a history deserving great praise."

Sir John Froissart's Preface to his Chronicles.

BOOK II.

WAT TYLER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROBIN HOOD."

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

"I'll read you matter deep and dangerous;
As full of peril and advent'rous spirit,
As to o'erwalk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear."

FIRST PART OF KING HENRY IV.

"THE sails were filled, and fair the light winds blew,
As glad to waft him from his native home;
And fast the white rocks faded from his view,
And soon were lost in circumambient foam:
And then it may be of his wish to roam
Repented he." CHILDE HAROLD.

"MANY gallant deeds of prowess and courage were done that day:—The Flemings fought valiantly, and the English attacked them in all the spirit of chivalry. The gallant Earl of Derby proved himself a good knight, and advanced so forward at the first assault, that he was struck down: and then the Lord of Manny was of essential service to him; for by his feats of arms he covered him and raised him up, and placed him out of danger, crying, 'Lancaster for the Earl of Derby!'"

FROISSART'S CHRONICLES.

PARTING from those we love—from home, kindred, friends — all ties which help to make the world an earthly paradise — to meet again, we know not when, we know not where, we know not how—is as painful as though the fell destroyer had done his work upon those beloved objects, if we except the poor consolation, which is the only stay and solace we have to enable us to bear the "distressful stroke," that we *may* meet again. He who has, for the first time, left behind him the home where he was reared, rendered by a thousand pleasant associations most dear to him, the fond unceasing attentions of a beloved mother, whose tender words and kind smile, though thousands of things may be effaced from his mind, still lives in his memory bright and unsullied; the old companions; the old places, scarce less pleasant to remember than the faces of the old friends; and perhaps one whom the warmth of youthful feelings has invested with the attributes of an angel, who is the first to be remembered, the most frequent to be thought of, and the last to be forgotten—he, who has for the first time left all *this* behind him, feels a prostration he never before experienced, and never will again; the low sinking depression of the heart; the sad forebodings of what may happen during absence; the changes which may take place before he can once more look upon those who were all the world to him, pass in sad review, leaving the frail hope only to cling to, that whatever distance or climate separated them, that they should be again united as happily—if possible, more so—than when they parted; that the Providence which governs all things would be kind to him, whatever it might prove to others.

To one like Wat, parted for an indefinite period from his birthplace, and those who made it "home,"

to be away possibly for years, perhaps to be slain the first engagement he entered into, and never, never look upon the loved faces more—the separation was one replete with sadness and pain. He strove bravely when he quitted the shore to keep up his spirits, that those around him might not think him less manly than he wished them to deem him; he tried, at a hard sacrifice, to laugh and talk, and appear cheerful, and not exhibit the dullness which clung to and clogged his heart like a load of lead; but his laugh wanted heartiness, his voice earnestness, and his actions the unaffected appearance of unrestrained mirth; he was too boisterous in his merriment to be real—everything he did was overstrained, too indicative of a mind ill at ease to be mistaken for pure enjoyment. He had, perhaps, little real cause to be much affected with sadness at his situation, for the two dearest objects of his heart were in a fair way of being completed even as he could desire; he was beloved by Violet, by her own confession, by her own words, "loved far better than was ever brother loved;" there was none held so high a place in her heart as did he, and she had sworn to be true, and never turn or swerve from him under any changes; and this vow she had uttered after trying in vain to persuade him not to leave her; this should have gladdened his heart. Then, again, he was in the army of Edward, in the noblest troop, beneath the banner of the "Flower of Chivalry,"—was his friend and protégé, and had only to signalize himself to gain the reward he so much coveted, that of a name, one which should be mentioned in such a way as to make Violet proud to become the bearer of it. These were two points upon which he had set his heart, and he had no cause to complain of their progress towards accomplishment; neither did he, for as on each he reflected, his bosom swelled with proud satisfaction. He knew the value of, and well appreciated Violet's tender acknowledgment; nor was he in the least degree blind to the advantage he possessed in being befriended by Sir Walter Manny, as well as serving under him, one beneath whose flag, on an after occasion, even Edward himself was not too proud to serve. It was not his prospects that made Wat feel sad; on the contrary, he looked forward with the brightest hope and anticipations to their realization; it was not that he regretted or repented the step he had taken, for were the same circumstances to be again enacted and he had the choice of a line of action, he would do precisely as he had done. It was nothing of this nature that affected his spirits to such an extent that his cheerfulness was an effort almost too much for him; it was that his heart had been so filled up with Violet, her presence so constant to him, that he missed her at every turn; without her, the place, though crowded with human beings, seemed desolate; there was a void which nothing but her form could fill; not a moment passed but he had upon him a sense of her absence; however animated the conversation, mirthful the tale, bright the flashes of wit passing from one to another, they drew him not from the consciousness of being away from Violet: it was true he laughed at the sallies and jests, smiled at the tales, and listened apparently with the profoundest attention to the conversation, and even joined in it, but the recollection was never one second from his mind that Violet was not there, nor that each moment widened the distance between them. His laugh, when he did laugh, was mechanical, his words seldom more than monosyllables; in the heart of an interesting tale he would, while others were listening eagerly, sit abstractedly and fill his vision with Violet, would imagine hundreds of things connected with her, and perhaps, if suddenly spoken or appealed to, would start up and reply like one awaking from a dream; this conduct was of such frequent occurrence as to excite the attention of Sir Walter Manny, and once Wat's abstracted reply to a question put to him exciting some laughter, Sir Walter took an opportunity of drawing him apart to seek the reason of his conduct.

"Why, friend Wat!" he exclaimed, when they were aside, "what makes thee so dull?"

"Dull!" cried Wat, forcing a laugh, "I dull? You mistake. I thought I was as lively as any one here."

"At times you are a shade too much so for it to be natural," said Sir Walter. "I have noticed you in the midst of almost boisterous mirth, suddenly grow serious and thoughtful, bend thy brows, and been lost in thought with such an air of sadness, that at times I have fancied you have repented of the step you have taken and were wishing thyself once more back again in the sweet little village of Brenchley. Every hour I have spent in your company since strengthens me in that belief; and, if my surmise is correct, hesitate not to tell me, Wat. Believe me, my friendship for you is something stronger than professions, and if you have a desire to return greater than to follow me, I will not let an opportunity pass until thy wish is accomplished. Speak out boldly, Wat, nor fear that I am promising more than I purpose performing."

"My very kind friend," returned Wat, gratefully, "if I have acted so strangely as you affirm—and I doubt not I have, or you would not say as much—it arises from no regret at the path I have chosen and resolved to follow: on the contrary, my heart beats high with anticipation of carrying out my intention in a way which shall not make you ashamed of our connection. I have not one thought which makes me wish I had acted otherwise; but I feel your kind offer none the less, as you shall some day, I trust, find. I do feel dull and oppressed, but I scarce know why: I have many times asked myself the question, for I have good cause to be joyful and be at ease at heart; yet am I dull, but I will shake it off, and appear in manner as I should be in mind."

"Should be?" echoed Sir Walter, "as I hope you are. Let me inquire, Wat—nor after our conversation on the matter at Brenchley, deem me impertinent in doing so—whether you have not since discovered my knowledge of the female heart is better than thine?"

"How mean you?"

"Hast thou not found that the gentle Violet's affection for thee was somewhat more than sisterly? By my troth! hast thou! that quick flash of thine eye tells me so—she loves thee, Wat, as——"

"As I, in my inmost soul, can desire, even as the most enthusiastic lover could wish to see his affection returned," exclaimed Wat, fervently, rather forgetting the intelligence was not calculated to be exactly delightful. He did not notice the change which passed over Sir Walter's features, as though a sudden spasm had for a moment convulsed him; he was too absorbed in the blissful remembrance to observe it. By a powerful struggle Sir Walter mastered it, and then said, with a faint smile—

"Marry, I was i' the right; I knew I had not learned to tell how the eyes will show the heart's inclinings, to be deceived in Violet's case; but even if I had, Wat, even had I suffered myself to be led away by your view of the matter, her manner to me the last time I was in her sweet presence would have completely sufficed to have awakened me from the pleasing delusion. You must have observed it, and from it must have drawn conclusions that for once you were mistaken in your opinion, and most agreeably so

Pray tell me in what manner an explanation between you was produced, and what was the cause of her acting in such a manner as to make you believe that I, and not you, had won her heart?"

"The explanation arose through the utterance of a careless word, and her conduct was occasioned by her incertitude respecting her birth. She has known no parents save her foster-father; has conceived the idea that she shall be restored to her mother, for whom her heart yearns, for whom it is full of love, for whom she has entertained such a sense of obedience that she feared, were she to forbid her bestowing her hand on me, she should, notwithstanding the pain she should feel, consent. To prevent my suffering the pangs of disappointment in being refused that on which my heart was set, she determined to act as you are aware she did, believing that if I understood she loved me only as a brother, I should be led to think of her only as a sister, and in the event of our union being denied, I should not be so grieved as I might, if I knew that she loved me as now I know she does. However, on perceiving the pain I felt at her adoption of her plan, seeing that I regarded her more devotedly than aught in the world beside, attaching a value also to services done her, of which they were unworthy, and desirous of not being ungrateful, she came at last, aided by the counsel of her foster-father, to give way to the dictates of her heart, and acknowledge that she loves me as I do her."

"You should be very happy, Wat Tyler," exclaimed Sir Walter, with a sigh.

"And am most proudly so. I seek only to make myself worthy of so rare a prize, and if by the bounty of Providence my life is spared, it shall go hard but I do."

"You will have the opportunity—the expedition we are on will give it you. I have no need to tell you not to suffer it to escape you."

"No! for my search for some chance of signalising myself shall be so eager, that no opportunity shall pass my quick eyes unobserved or untaken. Is it infringing propriety to ask the nature of the service we are engaged upon?"

"Not in this instance: a number of Flemish and French knights, under the command of Philip of France and the Earl of Flanders, have established themselves in the garrison, on the island of Cadsant, which lies between the havens of Sluys and Flushing, and there have harassed all good English subjects, whether in their neighbourhood or passing to and fro. Several nobles who have been in Hainault brought over the information, and Edward, enraged at hearing it, determined at once to put a stop to it. He has therefore placed six hundred men at arms, and two thousand archers, under the command of the Earl of Derby and myself, and we are now upon our way to clear the island of the enemy."

"What is to be our next destination, providing we are successful in this?"

"Oh! we return immediately to England; but you will find this engagement will only be the forerunner to severe work on the Continent. Keep up your spirits, Wat; honours and renown will soon be plentiful for those who have the courage and ability to grasp them. I have assigned a post for you—you shall be my esquire. Thou needest not fear that your sword will want employment—wherever the fight is hottest, there am I, and there will you be. You must doff your present attire, and take one more befitting a soldier and a member of my troop; a suit of mail must encase thy limbs, a helmet encircle thy brow, and then you will be appointed well enough to meet any danger, however pressing."

"I am prepared to do thy bidding; my good friend Leowulf, the smith, who accompanied me hither, has presented me with an entire suit, bascinet, camail, hauberk, and chaussés, all of his own workmanship, and whenever you may deem it necessary I will don them."

"In the morning we shall, the master of the ship informs me, be off the island of Cadsant. As soon as we can effect a landing, we shall proceed to engage. The numbers opposed to us, I am given to understand by good authority, exceed our own by at least two thousand five hundred men: it will therefore be advisable to be quite prepared, and take every precaution to avoid confusion, in order that we may overcome the disparity between our numbers. It is now near night; in the morning we shall see the coast of Flanders. Long before midday I confidently expect we shall be engaged; so when thou dost arise, habit thyself in thy mail, and I will give thee thy instructions how to act when we are hand to hand with the enemy."

"You shall be obeyed. Shall I see Michael before we engage?"

"Yes: he is with my troop in one of the vessels bearing the men at arms: when we land they will all arrange themselves under my banner, and be led by me. It will be your duty to be near me; and if it will give thee any satisfaction, he shall be placed so near thee in the fight that he may follow in thy footsteps if he wishes."

"He will wish it most earnestly, and my satisfaction will be very great at such an arrangement. I accept thy kind offer, and heartily thank thee for it."

"Thy friends also, Leowulf and Mark Grayling, may be similarly placed. On consideration, it will be better: being all friends, each one's example will stimulate the other to bold deeds, and will induce them to do more and fear less than if surrounded by men all strangers to them. By the way, did thy persuasions cause this addition to my followers?"

"No: I sought them both to take my farewell of them. Mark and Leowulf are related, and lived together in Brenchley. When I disclosed my intention of joining your troop, Mark instantly declared he would accompany me: that terrible affair at Wrotham had so completely blighted all his prospects of happiness, that he cared not what became of him, and hailed the opportunity of engaging in a stirring life with eagerness, because it would serve in a degree to drown recollections which his residence at Brenchley kept vividly before him. As soon as he had thus resolved, Leowulf determined to follow his example: he had been in service under Edward against the Scots—his heart glowed at the thought of joining once more in the excitement of warfare; and as he had no kindred to leave behind, save one who has no thought beyond his trade, he vowed he would accompany us, and leave all his worldly wealth to the charge of his relation, and here he is," he added, as he saw Leowulf slowly advancing. Before, however, he drew near, Sir Walter said quickly, and with much earnestness—

"Did Violet, when you parted from her, mention my name—in—in—any manner?"

"She did."

"And what said she?" he eagerly inquired.

"That she could not forget the very kind attentions you had paid her, the good services you had rendered her when she was in peril; that among those she was glad to think upon and number as friends, none were estimated more highly—nay, so highly as thee. She bade me bear thee her warmest thanks for past favours, her very kindest remem-

brances, and wished thee to know that when she offered up prayers, she forgot not to pray for thy safety and happiness. She has promised me, too, that when you return to England she will present thee with a banner, emblazoned with thine armorial bearings, worked with her own fair hands, as a token of her great esteem."

"The grace of the Holy and Blessed Virgin be ever upon the sweet angel for those kind words!" exclaimed Sir Walter, enthusiastically; "and my own dearest thanks to thee, Wat, for the message. A banner, too! how I will prize it! By heaven! the first deed done beneath its waving folds shall do it honour, or never will I wear spurs more."

At this moment Leowulf approached, and bowed deferentially to Sir Walter, who was scarce able to return the salutation, in consequence of the strong emotion pervading his frame. Leowulf, however, noticed it not, and exclaimed, in his usual blunt fashion,

"Well, Wat Tyler, art sorry thou'st left Brenchley behind? art grieved that thou'lt soon understand what fighting means? By the smith's god, Vulcan! the work of the other night was but child's play to what you will soon have to do. Is it not, Sir Walter?"

"By my troth, my bold smith, it may be of longer continuance, but it was so hotly contested in the village, I doubt if it could be much hotter. I judge by the number slain in the short time. You have seen service, smith?"

"I have—good hard fighting on the borders. I was at Halidon-hill, and the taking of Berwick-upon-Tweed, three years since, which, of course, you know all about, for you were at it."

"Yes—I was placed, with Sir William Montacute, in a fort afterwards, and had some of the severest skirmishes with the enemy I was ever engaged in; and Edward has not forgotten my services upon the occasion."

"Ho, ho! Wat, you should have seen the fight at Halidon-hill: that would make you understand the difference between a battle and a skirmish. The whole of our army were posted on a hill, and the Scots had to cross bogs and marshes to get at us; which they did, I confess, gallantly, and came rushing up the hill to attack us."

"And a tremendous onslaught they made," observed Sir Walter.

"Aye!" returned Leowulf, "the front of our army gave ground, but they were rallied by Sir Walter and Sir William Montacute, now Earl of Salisbury, and soon repulsed the Scots. Their leader, the regent Douglas, was slain, with a host of chiefs of clans, in the *melée*. Their followers being thus without leaders, were all put in disorder; some fled, others continued fighting desperately—clan mixed with clan—rank with rank—all order was lost. They were driven back with dreadful havoc, and at last began everywhere to fly. As soon as Edward perceived this he sent the cavalry among them. It was then, Sir Walter, I saw you do deeds for bold men to wonder at, driving the foe before you like flocks of frightened deer. You were followed by Sir William and Lord Darcy, with his Irishmen. Edward himself joined with fierce sword in the fray. On all sides the defeated Scots fled. The slaughter was tremendous: the bogs and marshes were choked up with dead bodies: in every place they lay in heaps—it was horrible to witness the massacre. Glorying as I did in the battle, my heart turned sick at the sight of such numbers slain: and after Edward had entered Berwick, he returned to London, and having permission to quit the army, I returned to Brenchley, with the determination of following my trade for the future while I lived. But the old yearning for the glorious profession of arms is again upon me; and once more I am Leowulf the man at arms, 'stead of Leowulf the smith."

"Were you ever wounded?" asked Sir Walter.

"No," replied the smith, "I have been more fortunate—or perhaps more prudent. The mail I wear is every ring of it made by my own hands, of the very finest tempered steel; the blade that will cleave it must be of a metal unequalled, such as I have never seen; and for my bascinet, there's not a head in the army wears one to surpass it—it will turn the edge of the keenest battle-axe; that, too, is of my own making: so I stand little chance of being lightly cut down. The mail suit which I have given to Wat was also made ring for ring i' the same fashion; it equals my own, and will not easily be surpassed. When there is a lapse of service enabling me to have my time at my own command, if you will suffer me, I will fashion you a hauberk, a camail, and chausées of such strength they shall defy any weapon."

"A spear?" asked Sir Walter.

"Aye; for wherever a spear's point can do hurt, a small plate of steel shall be placed to effectually resist it. I can fashion you, too, a bascinet of a new form, having a vizor to protect your face, and not hinder your vision. They are quite new; only a few have yet been made."

"I have seen one, and like the fashion much," observed Sir Walter, "and as soon as an opportunity will allow, I will call thy services gladly into requisition, and pay thee handsomely for thy work."

"I seek no pay!" exclaimed Leowulf, a little proudly. "If Sir Walter will not think it beneath him to accept a specimen of my ability as a smith, I shall be greatly pleasured as well as honoured by his receiving the fruits of my labour as a free gift."

"As thou wilt, good Leowulf," said Sir Walter, smiling; "I consider not the meanest gift beneath my acceptance; I look upon it, however humble it may be, as a token of goodwill towards me, and I am too happy at all times to receive evidences of a goodly feeling for me, ever to value a present for its intrinsic worth, save in a case like thine, where the actual worth of the gift makes me chary in accepting it. However, when the time for its acceptance arrives, you will not find me either too proud to receive it, or ungrateful to the donor."

"Pray have you the son of the Earl of Tonbridge and his cousin with you?" asked Wat Tyler of Sir Walter.

"They accompany the expedition, but not in this vessel. You see yon bark with a scarlet flag flying at the stern?" he said, pointing to one of the many vessels belonging to the expedition.

"I do," answered Wat.

"They are there. They arrived late, and were compelled to enter the vessel, which was the last to receive troops. The old Earl has sent a score or so of retainers to back young Rupert; but I am afraid they will take some trouble before they are of much use. My despatch summoning Rupert to join me was so sudden that he had little or no time to prepare, and when his fellows reached London they were only half accoutred; raw vassals off the Earl's estate. We were obliged to fit them with whatever came first to hand, for they were so late there was barely time to get them anything. They present rather a motley appearance: some are armed with spears, others only with swords; some have bills, some cross-bows, some guisarms, and a few have pikes. I doubt not when

young Rupert sees the appointments of the various troops he will blush to own his followers, unless they so conduct themselves as to make the variety of their weapons a matter of no moment. Ulfred, I will wager my best pole-axe, no sooner casts his eye upon their array, than he will disown their companionship; he so well understands what should be the appointments of a troop, and the light in which Rupert's followers will be regarded, that his pride will receive a violent shock. He will eschew all idea of placing himself at their head, and wish his uncle had done anything but sent followers."

"But surely he was aware of their coming?" observed Wat.

"I fancy not. He accompanied me to London, and remained with Edward until the last moment. He embarked with Rupert, and will have little opportunity of judging how his friends are armed until he lands."

"Are these followers Kentish men?" asked Leowulf.

"Yes; I believe I told you they were vassals off the Earl's estate," replied Sir Walter.

"Then," exclaimed Leowulf, "let them be armed whatever fashion they may, they will do their duty gallantly and fearlessly: there's not a troop, however well accoutred or well disciplined, that will surpass them in courage. If the youth be ashamed of their habiliments, let me lead them; I warrant they will not disgrace the county or country they come from."

"Not in courage, I believe," said Sir Walter; but that is not enough in war: as much depends on order and discipline as bravery. But I confess it is unfair to prejudge them because of their accoutrements, though I cannot help smiling when I think of the proud young Rupert's chagrin on witnessing their appearance by the side of the others."

Sir Walter was at this point of the conversation summoned to confer with the Earl of Derby, and Wat was left alone with Leowulf, who seemed a little ruffled.

"Sir Walter Manny seems to think," he said, just after he had left, "that a man cannot fight unless he is dressed in a certain fashion. By the god Woden! I could bring him a troop of ragged rascals, with scarce a rag of covering to keep them decent, who should fight as fiercely and bravely as the best garbed troopers i' the army. It is not a man's clothes that make him fight, that make him gallant, noble, or whatever a man should be. By 'r Lady! there's many a villain's heart beating beneath a rich garment, and many a true one barely covered with a long worn jerkin. Ho! ho! if knaves and cowards only went ill clothed, there would be many of noble birth who would go ragged."

"You misunderstand Sir Walter, it is evident," exclaimed Wat. "He only smiles at the idea of the Earl of Tonbridge sending followers to make his son's position greater than it is, and from their want of discipline and proper attire they will go far to lessen it. The young lord is very proud, and will no doubt be much annoyed at seeing the figure they will make among the regular troops. He does not impeach their courage or ability, but laughs at their ridiculous situation."

"Well, no matter whatever droll figure they may cut, if he will only let me lead them on, I make my avow to God! there shall be none do better who are better clad."

"Doubtless. I have just remembered a question I wished to ask you. There was at my mother's, when I quitted home, a wretch whom she told me was brought there by Canute, in accordance with your orders; was it so?"

"A wounded cavalier, mean you?"

"Yes."

"It is true; I picked him up in the wood nearly senseless. I gathered from him that he had been wounded by Grif of the Bloody Hand, for whom I was searching when I discovered the wounded man. I could not take him to my own shed, for there was none there to give him the help he needed, and I was about to convey him to Halbert Evesham's when I encountered Canute; and as I wished to find Grif, I bade him do the duty I was then performing, but he told me that Halbert was wounded and ill, and little Flora also. By the way, Wat, what is the cause of her ailing?"

"An affection of the heart," said Wat, significantly. Leowulf took it literally, and replied—

"Poor little thing, I am sorry to hear it; I hope she will soon get well again. I was fond of her; she was so very lively, so very merry, had such a pretty laughing face, and such sparkling eyes. Poor little thing! an affection of the heart! By the way, Michael was very much wrapt up in her, I remember, and Mark tells me he too has come to the wars. I have not seen him since the morning after our fray with the devils, and I thought that rather strange, for he hopped about here, there, and everywhere. Ho! ho! what a fellow he was to chatter; but a good-hearted-youth—a very good-hearted youth, and of good courage. I have often thought he just suited Flora. How came he to leave Brenchley?"

"He did it in a hasty moment—but you are wandering from my question."

"True. Well, understanding that Halbert had no room for the fainting stranger, I thought of your father's roof, from whose shelter no one was ever turned without having received the full rights of hospitality, and accordingly I sent him there.

"Did he say he was wounded by Grif?"

"I asked him the question, and he nodded his head."

"The rascal lied. They were friends, and acted in concert. It was he who carried off Violet—it was through him that Grif attacked the village—that was Martin du Bois, of whom you heard me speak in such bitter terms."

"The hound! I wish I had known that. Ho! ho! I wish I had known that. I wasted some time over him, instead of which I would have strung him up to a branch of the tree beneath which he was lying when I first saw him."

"Did he give any name—any false name?"

"No; the wretch could not muster breath to utter a word. Ho! ho! Martin du Bois, of all the knaves in the world, too—and I to be so tender and careful of him."

"Did you mention this circumstance to Ethelbert Evesham?"

"No; but I did about the other fellow, though."

"What other fellow?"

"Why, a simple foolish dog I discovered in Grif's cave, who, it seems, knew a great deal connected with Ethelbert."

"Indeed!" cried Wat, eagerly. "Are you acquainted with it, or any portion of it?"

"No. He only told me he was compelled to be a member of the band because he knew some secrets of a noble, a lady, her husband—who, he said, was Ethelbert—and an infant."

"Holy Virgin! did Ethelbert see him?"

"Oh, yes; I brought Ulph—that was the little frightened knave's name—to him."

"Did he tell him these secrets?"

"Yes; but I did not hear what they were, for,

while they were talking, I was watching for you to come from Halbert's cottage and wave your hand, which, when you did, I made him acquainted with. Whatever the things were, which the little cowherd related to him, they were of much importance, for, if I recollect aright, Ethelbert said they were, and the little fellow had suffered hard trials through the events which had occurred to him. He bade me lead him to my dwelling, and show him every kindness, which I did, and left him there when I came here."

"I would give worlds to know the nature of his communication," muttered Wat, abstractedly. "It must have related to Violet—it must have done so. I would I had seen him!"

"So you did," said Leowulf, overhearing Wat's exclamation. "He was standing by the forge when you came to bid I and Mark farewell. You looked several times upon him with inquiring eyes; and, as you did not ask who he was, I did not think it worth while to tell you."

"I scarce noticed him; I was in no frame of mind to take much notice of anything. Had I known what I do now, I would have eagerly questioned him."

Wat interrogated Leowulf for some time longer, in the hope of gathering something more satisfactory to allay the intense curiosity which the smith's mention of the circumstances connected with Ulph had created. But in vain. He ascertained nothing more; and when Leowulf quitted him he was left to imagine a thousand things. He firmly believed the discovery of Violet's parents had been made, but did she know it? Assuredly not. Just before they parted he had asked her whether Ethelbert had communicated aught respecting them to her, and she had replied in the negative—had told him that not a word had passed his lips even in allusion to them. If, then, he knew who they were, why had he not told her? He could find no answer to that question, and then endeavoured himself to imagine who they could be—whether Sir John Maltravers was really her father, and Martin du Bois her brother. Then he remembered he had left the latter near her: he might not be her brother, after all. He might soon be restored to health; might elude the vigilance of Ethelbert—for even he might not always be so alert as he had been—and, bearing off Violet, perpetrate some outrage when there was none near to prevent it. His blood boiled scaldingly in his veins as this thought crossed him, and for the moment he wished he had never quitted her side; then again he laughed at his fancies, and dismissed them only to indulge in them from time to time.

Night came on. He retired to a berth which the friendship of Sir Walter had obtained, and, notwithstanding he had never before been upon the sea, slept soundly without feeling the usual effects; in the morning he arose refreshed, and donned his military garb. When he had completed his attire, few would have recognised, in the stalwart martial-looking figure his habiliments made him appear, the village youth Wat Tyler. Upon his head was a bright steel bascinet, or skull cap, to the edges of which, from temple to temple, passing behind the head, was fastened a camail, or neck-guard of chain mail, leaving an opening for the face, in the shape of an oblong shield; upon his body was a hauberk of chain mail, over which was a cyclas, or surcoat of leather, shorter than the hauberk; his legs were covered with chaussés of mail; his feet dressed in the sandal worn at the period, and his hands were gauntleted; he bore with him his long two-handed sword, and to his belt, on his right side, was appended a broad dagger, which was termed an anelace; a long triangular shield completed his appointments. When fully equipped, he went on deck. It was a bright clear morning; there was a pleasant fresh wind blowing, and the sea looked green and sparkling. Wat stood and enjoyed the sight with much pleasure. While contemplating it intently, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a voice, which he immediately recognised to be Sir Walter's, exclaimed,—

"This should be Wat Tyler, or some stranger with whose presence in the vessel I am unacquainted."

Wat turned his head to him instantly, and he continued—

"It is thee! Why, aye, this is as I would have thee look; thy accoutrements become thee right gallantly. Here is the Earl of Derby, Wat, who wishes to know thee."

Wat perceived a knight richly habited standing by Sir Walter's side, and he made a profound obeisance to him, which the Earl gracefully returned.

"He saw thee make that leap over the men-at-arms at the Tower a few mornings since," continued Sir Walter, "and much admired the feat; by a strange coincidence his lordship this morning mentioned it to me, and I told him something more about you. He inquired your age; I told him, and he doubts my word. I may have been mistaken, but I think not. In what year were you born?"

"Thirteen hundred and nineteen," answered Wat, readily.

"Then you are no more than seventeen?" said the Earl of Derby.

"I reached that age a few days since," replied Wat.

"I can scarce credit it to look upon you, more especially in your present costume," exclaimed the Earl; but since you tell me so much, I must, of course, believe it. Wat, my gallant youth, you have begun well, and I trust will soon carve for yourself a good name; the path is open to you, and it rests with yourself to take advantage of it."

"I shall use my best endeavour that no opportunity of signalising myself worthily do escape me," returned Wat. "I have everything to gain, fame and fortune; I am sure, however hazardous the service you may require of me, you will not find me reluctant or idle in obeying you."

"Thou hast spoken well," said the Earl; "thou shalt not want advancement from me while thou dost deserve it. Thou'rt fortunate in having a friend in Sir Walter Manny, for he will place plenty of opportunities in thy way to try thy courage and skill, and be the first to make known thy success."

"I have not to learn the value of Sir Walter's friendship," uttered Wat, warmly; "it shall be my constant care that I keep myself worthy of it."

"I'faith you will not have much trouble," laughed Sir Walter in reply. "It comes natural to thee to act with honour in all thou dost, and so long as you continue to do so, so long are we friends."

The captain of the vessel now approached, and pointed out to the Earl and Sir Walter the coast of Flanders, to the north of which, between the havens of Sluys and Flushing, lay the island of Cadsant, for which they were bound. They had a fair wind, and in answer to a question to that effect, the captain told them they would be able to land in a few hours. Signals were instantly made to all the vessels to draw together, in order that they might reach the island as nearly at the same time as possible, and render the disembarkation simultaneous. The command was obeyed, and when in a few hours the shore was approached, all the vessels were in a cluster. Their arrival had been anticipated by the Flemings and the French; they had assembled in great numbers, and

well armed, upon the sands and the dykes. They were commanded by a gallant knight, Sir Guy of Flanders, who, assisted by several other knights—many of them created for the occasion—exhorted his men to defend the island to the utmost, which they all vowed to do, and well they kept their word. In the meanwhile all the troops in the English vessels were assembled, all armed and accoutred, ready for instant battle the moment they landed; a point which appeared highly necessary, for the shore was lined with the enemy. Wat, as he looked with a quickened beating of the heart upon them, ranged in great numbers, began to doubt if a landing could be managed without great loss, unless some means were employed to clear the shore of their opposers. They were now nearing the shore rapidly, their trumpets were sounding loudly, the troops were shouting their war-cry from the different ships—sounds which were returned by those on land. Nearer and nearer they drew, and then Wat perceived that the difficulty he imagined under which the landing was to be effected would be obviated; the archers, of which every vessel had a large share in comparison with the men-at-arms, were placed in the fore part of the vessels, and as soon as they had obtained a position sufficiently near for their arrows to take effect, discharged them with such precision that they told with terrible power upon the enemy; the discharges were kept up with so much regularity and force that there was no resisting them, numbers fell desperately wounded, and after remaining some time, they were compelled to retire and leave the landing clear. The shore was gained, the troops disembarked, pouring out with great rapidity, and as the respective banners were raised they joined them without confusion, although they kept on shouting their war-cry, and the archers still, wherever they could, discharging their arrows. At length Sir Walter Manny's banner was raised, and numbers flocked to it; among them Wat's quick eyes detected Michael; he advanced with equal alacrity to the rest, and appeared glowing with ardour to mix in the deadly conflict; but Wat at once detected, in the pale and already thin face and burning eyes, that he was influenced by a feeling of desperation, a recklessness of life, which was not the feeling actuating the chivalric warrior to deeds of daring. It was easy to perceive, in the expression of his features, that some unhappy occurrences had made life of no value to him, had induced him to mix in scenes of death to get rid of his wretched thoughts and life together. When he drew near, Wat called him by name, and he turned round with a rapid astonished air to where Wat stood, but as soon as he saw his figure, the sudden light which had flashed over his features vanished; he still looked astonished, but the expression was changed; he, however, came up to Wat, and said—

"You called me by name, but I know you not; what want you with me?"

"Have you so soon forgotten your old friend, Wat Tyler?" exclaimed our hero, quietly.

"Holy Mother of God! Wat, is it you? it must be; I thought I knew the voice. In Heaven's name! how came you here, and in that garb?"

"I too, Michael, have joined Sir Walter Manny's troop, and that is the reason of my being here."

"But you—you have not had the cause to leave home I have," interrupted Michael, quickly; "Violet could never trifle with your feelings—break your heart—as Flora has mine," he concluded, turning away his head to conceal the bitterness of his feelings.

"Tush, Michael, break your heart—no such thing," said Wat, with an endeavour to cheer him; "you have acted too hastily, too impetuously; instead of you having a broken heart, I am afraid it is Flora who will be the sufferer."

"Foh!" cried Michael, scornfully.

"Nay!" ejaculated Wat, "your scorn is misplaced, as you will find. Why did you quit your home, friends, everything in that sudden, reckless, uncalled-for manner?"

"Uncalled-for? Wat—uncalled-for?—were you not in the room when she treated me most contumeliously? as if I was a stock, a stone, a fool, that she might twist round her finger as she pleased—a valueless, uncared-for follower, to be retained or discarded, cast off at will, if any one a tithe better appeared; to endure insult and even scorn, dealt out plenteously, too, before those who cannot boast a truer heart or a clearer conscience than myself. Did she not treat me thus? *me*, who loved her with an enthusiastic devotion, would have sacrificed all to do her honour; *I*, whom the very night previous she had confessed to love as she loved no one else; I who had risked life and limb for her, and would have died with a smile upon my lips if it would have saved her a pang; she knew I would, she knew it, Wat! and yet see how lightly, how cheaply she held me, after deceiving me, too, by pretending a love she never felt. I would not have treated her so—no, I would have buried my knife in my heart rather; and for all this, the first smooth-faced comer I was to be thrown aside for, treated like a poor fool whom nobody thought of the least consequence in the world—I did think I should be better out of it when I first quitted the cottage, but I thought my death would give her pleasure, and so I held my hand; but that care is over, and I mind not how soon the arrow is sped, or the sword unsheathed, which will lay me low."

"For shame, Michael!" exclaimed Wat, energetically; "you have suffered your feelings to carry you too far. I again repeat you have acted too hastily, and I will show you that you have. You have acknowledged that Flora's spirits are so great at times that they make her say and do many things which she does not really mean—that they are but jests, only meant as such, an innocent desire to tease, and nothing further—you have frequently taken them as earnest, and acted just as though her banter with another was really serious, until you have had good reason to believe that nothing further than playfulness, mere teasing you, was the object. If she had not loved you, she would never have troubled herself to have tormented you; on discovering this to be the case, you have confessed that whatever she did again in that fashion you would not misconstrue, but take it as if it really was an overflow of spirits which she had not strength, was not in her nature, to control. I overheard thee say, even the night before you quitted, when she exhibited such interest in your safety, that you were a fool for fancying a hundred things you had done, and never would again while you lived; and yet the very next morning, when her spirits were very great—who knows but what they were caused by your escaping the conflict unhurt?—you take umbrage at a little harmless flightiness, and, without considering who would suffer beside yourself, throw yourself into a situation of danger from which it is impossible, whatever revolution of feeling you may have, you can extricate yourself when you wish. Had you stayed only to have had a few words with me, your precipitate act might have been prevented, and considerable anguish spared."

"To whom?"

"To whom but Flora!"

"It is in vain to talk thus to me, Wat. I cannot

—will not believe it. Flora never cared for me, or she would not, at every opportunity, delight in wounding my feelings. She knew her conduct pained me

at my departure, or anybody cared a straw for it."

"It is false, Michael!" exclaimed Wat, warmly, "there were many to regret it. You think little of

bitterly. I have told her so too often for her to pretend otherwise, and, therefore, cannot for one moment retain the idea that she suffered anguish

the friendship I feel for you, if you suppose I did not feel pained——"

"I did not allude to you, Wat," interposed Michael.

"I know you are my true friend, and are now taking all this trouble from a kind feeling to ease my mind; but I can see through it, and tell you frankly, I thank you heartily, but you may spare yourself the trouble—it is all in vain."

"Michael, you will make me speak abruptly," exclaimed Wat, a little angrily. "Hear, then, in a breath, the consequences of your departure. Sir Walter Manny had scarce delivered your message, when he departed, taking the son and nephew of the Earl of Tonbridge with him. At the same moment Flora fainted away, entirely bereft of sense or motion at the intelligence of the step you had taken——"

"Wat — Wat, is this true?" cried Michael, agitatedly.

"Hear me out," replied Wat. "It was with some difficulty that Violet, aided by me, recovered her; but when she did, and she remembered what had transpired, she wept a flood of tears, fell upon her knees to me, beseeching me to follow you to bring you back. She bade me tell you how much she lamented her conduct—that she would never repeat it—that she did not love you less while acting so, and meant only what she did harmlessly. She entreated of you to come back, even if you never saw or spoke to her more. She would strive to bear it patiently, because she felt she had deserved it, but would not think ill of you; but you must return. If you did not, she should break her heart. Sobs choked her further utterance; and she was led away by Violet. I followed you to London, but did not reach it until a few hours after you had sailed, and returned, of course, unsuccessful."

"And what said Flora?" demanded Michael, earnestly.

"It so happened that I was unable to see her until just before I quitted Brenchley to come here, and then, I am sorry to tell you, she did not know me."

"Not know you, Wat? Speak — what was the matter?"

"The violence of her grief had brought on a brain fever, and she was delirious. She became thus soon after I set off in quest of you, and my failure had not been communicated to her when I departed to join Sir Walter."

"Holy Mother! if I could have foreseen this; if I could have brought myself to believe that she thus loved me, I could have borne her waywardness, would have submitted to her whims and caprices, rather than this should have been the consequence of my hasty conduct. What is to be done? My God! she may be dead before this, through my inconsiderate rashness. Oh, fool! fool that I was, to give way so easily to my weakness! What can I do, Wat? Tell me—for Heaven's sake advise me, or I shall go mad too!"

"Which of you is named Walter Tyler?" cried a man-at-arms, suddenly accosting them.

"I am so called," replied Wat, quickly.

"Sir Walter Manny is calling for you, and you must this instant attend him," replied the man, departing hastily.

"Follow me, Michael, cried Wat. "We have no time now to talk. If we are both spared, we will talk the matter over when the fight is done. Follow me! Through Sir Walter's kindness, we shall fight side by side."

"I am very glad of that; for if I had not seen you, I should have made but little resistance to the first weapon opposed to me; but now I'll fight as I did the other night, in the hope to conquer and get back to Flora. I will go back to her, Wat, for I do think I have been too hasty; and, from what you say, I don't think she will do anything again to wound my feelings."

"You may be sure of that. After the fight we will see what is best to be done." As Wat concluded, he made rapidly for the spot where Sir Walter and the Earl of Derby were delivering their orders to the different troops, as under their respective leaders they had formed and were ready for service. Several had been despatched to clear the sands of a number of French and Flemings, who were still there, discharging arrows at the English as they landed, and by the time this duty had been performed, the whole body were ready to storm the haven and city. As Sir Walter was about to give his orders to Wat, he suddenly burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, which all the efforts he made to check it only seemed to increase. Wat looked at him rather astonishedly, but Sir Walter continued his laugh without his being able to perceive the cause. He heard some sounds of merriment arising from different sides, and turned round as the Earl of Derby exclaimed—

"'Fore Heaven! Sir Walter Manny, what scapegraces are these?"

He looked in the direction to which the Earl was pointing, and saw Rupert advancing at the head of about fifty men, who were armed in every fashion that could be imagined; some in military attire, others in rustic vestments; some small men with helmets a world too large for them, and tall ones with them as much too small. It seemed as if they had each purposely taken that which least suited them. A number of little fellows were toiling under great battle and pole-axes, and a few big ones were flourishing estocs, a small stabbing sword, as though they had straws in their hand. Again, the little ones were bearing long spears, and the tall ones were provided with half pikes but little longer than swords. Here was a short one with a surcoat that reached to the calves of his legs, and was with difficulty preventing his skull-cap from popping down to his chin, while a stalwart fellow had on a surcoat scarcely reaching his waist, and was with much ado balancing a bascinet on his head, made originally for one-half his size. One bore a shield which reached from the top of his cap to his heels; another had one scarce covering his back; they were of all heights, widths, and calibre, costume and manner. They were, happily, not conscious of their incongruous appearance—they came on shouting, blowing trumpets with a very indistinct idea of the capabilities of the instrument, and brandishing their ill-sorted arms with the most perfect satisfaction at the position they believed they held; they mistook the loud laugh with which they were greeted, as they passed the different companies of soldiers, for a friendly display of pleasure at their arrival, and had no thought whatever that they in any way appeared ridiculous. As Sir Walter had anticipated, Ulfred no sooner clapped his eyes upon them, and perceived their extraordinary array, than he burst into a fit of laughter, but as instantly looked serious, and blushed for very shame that he should be connected with them; he, however, resolved to eschew their company, and bidding Rupert follow him, galloped up to Sir Water Manny for orders. He thought there was rather a wicked look lurking in the knight's eyes as he inquired for Rupert and his followers. He took no notice of it, and said they would presently join him. Sir Walter turned away his head to conceal his smile, and bade him remain by his side for the present. Rupert placed himself at the head of the motley group, and his fiery nature was soon roused by observing the titters, and soon the loud laugh which on all sides hailed his advance. He was

not slow to perceive the cause, and perspired profusely with rage, shame, and vexation. He was not sorry to reach Sir Walter's side, and gave the word to halt, with an inward wish at the same moment, that the earth would open and swallow them up to a man. He chafed and fumed, but was unable to utter his wrath, checked by the fear of an infringement of discipline, but he gave Ulfred a look which very plainly told the state of his feelings.

"Who are these scarecrows, Sir Walter?" exclaimed the Earl of Derby, laughingly repeating his question. Ulfred, who stood at his elbow, felt the blood tingle in his ears and burn his brow on hearing the question.

"They are some recruits the Earl of Tonbridge has obtained for his Majesty's service, and as his son was about to join me, he took the opportunity of sending them with him. They joined so very late at the Tower, they were obliged to have whatever weapons and accoutrements which in the hurry could be obtained," answered Sir Walter Manny, to remove the ridicule from Rupert's shoulders, an act which Ulfred did not fail afterwards to thank him for, but at the time exclaimed—

"They do present a singular appearance, but I am satisfied the ill-fashion of their gear will not prevent them fighting bravely. They will not fly, I will gage my honour; they will be cut to pieces first."

"They will be cut to pieces, and that quickly," said the earl, "unless some one who is well competent leads them. The youth now at their head, who, I suppose, is the son of the Earl of Tonbridge, is too young and inexperienced to head raw undisciplined vassals."

"Your lordship is right. The point is easily settled. The youth shall with me. I have a man who will head these men, and do more with them than a better disciplined one could. Wat Tyler, summon thy friend, Leowulf. He wished for the command, and he shall have it."

Wat obeyed, and, mixing with the soldiers, was not long in discovering Leowulf, and instantly brought him to Sir Walter, who said—

"You were anxious to lead those Kentish men, my bold smith?"

"I was, and am now as willing, after having seen them," was the reply.

"It is well," exclaimed Sir Walter. "Place thyself at their head, follow in the rear of my troop, and keep them in reserve until you receive my further orders."

Leowulf bowed, and, accompanied by Ulfred, took his way to Rupert's followers. Ulfred told them Sir Walter's orders, and took Rupert, who uttered a sigh of relief, back with him to the knight.

Everything was now prepared, and the word was passed to move on to the assault. The archers commenced by discharging a heavy fire of arrows, and then the men-at-arms rushed up to the walls of the haven, which were obstinately defended. The first assault was tremendous. The Earl of Derby had hoped to carry the haven at the first charge, while the Flemings and French had equally intended to give them at first such a tremendous repulse, that they would be disheartened, and fly. Thus, the first shock was terrific, foe mingled with foe, hand-to-hand, troop supported troop, until nearly the whole force on both sides were brought into action. The French and Flemings numbered above five thousand; while of the English there were only two thousand archers and six hundred men-at-arms. The disparity was great, but the English made up in courage what they needed in numbers. The archers were so expert, and took their aims with such amazing correctness, that they brought down the enemy in great numbers. The English kept gaining ground step by step. Sir Walter Manny fought valiantly; he led his men to various points, and wherever he appeared the foe gave ground before him. Wat followed in his footsteps, fighting like a lion, frequently receiving plaudits from Sir Walter for his deeds. At length Sir Walter, espying a weak place in the enemy's front, where an opening might be made, despatched Wat to the Earl of Derby, advising him of it, requesting him to force his way through, and that he would effect a junction with him by cutting his way through the line now opposed to him. Wat departed at full speed to obey him, not unfrequently obliged to fight his way as he drew nearer the Earl's standard, which he saw dancing about. He found the fight growing thicker and hotter, and at length perceived that the Earl, with a handful of men, was surrounded by a large number of Flemings, but was defending himself bravely. He lost no time in returning to Sir Walter, and acquainting him with the earl's situation. The knight, leaving a party of men to continue the fight, took the remainder with him, sending orders for Leowulf to bring up his little band to the force he had just left, and cut a passage through the foe; and then hastily joined the Earl of Derby. The fight thickened round them; it was soon bruited between the French and Flemings, that one of the English leaders was nearly in their power, and they sent reinforcements to make sure of their prize. Sir Walter, on the other side, made desperate efforts to rescue him.

"A Manny! a Manny! to the rescue!" he shouted with all his strength, and it was echoed from mouth to mouth by his followers. "Lancaster! Lancaster!" he continued, "for the Earl of Derby!" it was then known who was in peril, and great exertions were made to recover him; fresh troops poured to his aid, and on the other side numbers flocked to assist in his capture. Sir Walter Manny, though fighting with tremendous vigour, was unable to make the progress he was accustomed to, or expected; he was opposed by two brothers of great bulk, armed to the teeth in steel; they resisted all his attacks, and as it would have been a tarnish to his honour to have left them even to have sought a fresh foe, he continued fighting with them although the Earl's safety might be endangered by it. Wat Tyler, who was near him, soon observed the strait he was in, and gained his side; he attacked one of the brothers fiercely, and quickly compelled him to relinquish his contest with Sir Walter, making him turn to him; the Fleming, who fought with a pole-axe, expected to make easy work with Wat, and accordingly flourished his weapon with the intention of inflicting a tremendous blow upon him—one which should cleave his skull in twain; but Wat was prepared for it, leaped lightly aside as it descended and with its force buried itself deeply in the sand. Before the Fleming could extricate it, Wat delivered so terrific a blow with his two-handed sword upon his neck, that it cut through the neck guard, and severed it almost in twain. The fellow dropped; and at the same time Sir Walter cut down his foe with a blow which slashed through his shoulder to his breast. There were still others to fight through before the Earl could be reached—fellows who fought fiercely and desperately, preferring to be slain rather than give an inch. Sir Walter's axe flew in all directions, cutting for himself a path, in which he was ably seconded by Wat and an esquire named John Chandos. While Sir Walter was battling with a new foe, a Frenchman thrust a lance at him. It was well aimed, and directed with great force; it had just reached his surcoat when Wat observed it, and had just time to cut it down ere it

penetrated the hauberk. The next moment he seized the fellow by the throat, and made him a prisoner; he was quickly passed to the rear, and Wat continued his career. On rejoining Sir Walter, the knight exclaimed—

"'Twas gallantly performed, Wat Tyler—crave a boon of me. I will not forget thy service."

"Aha, young comrade," cried John Chandos, the esquire, "you are fortunate—a word of praise from Sir Walter is worth a mine of wealth; the next must be for me. Ho, there! a Manny! a Manny! to the rescue!" As the esquire uttered this, he plunged bodily among a number of the enemy who were keeping Sir Walter at bay, with such sudden vigour, that they gave ground. Wat rushed after him, closely followed by Michael, who fought right nobly. Sir Walter cheered them on, waved his terrible battle-axe around his head, and was no laggard in the desperate work. Again he cried—

"On there! to the rescue! a Manny! Lancaster! for the Earl of Derby!" and dashed in the opening made by John Chandos, Wat Tyler, and Michael; his gallant troopers followed close at his heels, cutting and thrusting desperately, shouting with all their strength of lungs, and rapidly gaining ground.

Still waved the Earl of Derby's banner in the air, though, by the way it was shaken to and fro, it was easy to tell the fight was fierce and deadly around it: for some time had the Earl and a handful of followers maintained their ground; in their eagerness to be first in the fray they had been surrounded, but had fought gallantly back to back, resolving to die rather than retreat or surrender themselves prisoners. Bravely had they kept their determination, but even courage will not hold out against numbers; their strength, from their desperate exertion, was failing them—they grew exhausted, many were cut down, and all hope seemed lost. But the Earl heard Sir Walter's cry, and fought madly to the last; the foe pressed him so hardly, and in such numbers, he had no room to use his weapon; quarter was proposed to him by several mouths at once, but he disdained reply; at length one fellow near him whirled, by a blow of prodigious strength, his battle-axe from his hands, and bade him beg for mercy; but, by way of answer, he drew his anelace with sudden speed and buried it in the fellow's heart; he was instantly struck down by a Fleming, but at the same moment Wat and John Chandos burst through the surrounding foe; John Chandos cut down the Fleming who was about to repeat the blow which had levelled the Earl; Wat Tyler bestrode the Earl's body, dealing fierce blows around him; while Sir Walter, who followed so close that it was scarce possible to say he was behind, sheltered the Earl's head with his shield, and soon there was a space made to enable them to restore the Earl to his feet; he was only a little stunned by the blow he had received, which had not penetrated his bascinet. He muttered his thanks. Sir Walter Manny again shouted—

"Lancaster! Lancaster! for the Earl of Derby!" and plunged into the thickest of the fight, closely followed by the Earl, Wat, and John Chandos; the men-at-arms of both leaders following, animated to desperation by their example. The conflict now became terrific. The English archers poured in their arrows with undiminished vigour; the men-at-arms did their duty most courageously, and the distance between them and the ships was materially increased. The dykes were passed and the walls of the haven were surmounted—the Flemings and French falling back slowly into the town, determined to defend that to the last extremity. Hotly and fiercely they contested every inch of ground ere they surrendered it; but though they fought manfully, they could not withstand the superior courage and ardour of the English troops. In every part they gave way, and at length the haven was carried. The town had now to be attacked and taken—by far the most difficult part of the work to be accomplished. Sir Guy of Flanders had everything in his favour, both as regarded position and numbers. The courage of his men was unquestionable, and it seemed scarcely possible that he could be ousted; indeed he thought so himself, but so did not Sir Walter Manny. He gave his people a short time to refresh themselves, and then led them on to the assault. The first onslaught was fiercely repelled, but instantly renewed again; they were beaten back, to again rush on with unabated vigour. Sir Walter's voice was constantly heard above the fray, exciting and animating his men to emulate deeds which he performed—deeds which might well be termed prodigies of valour; his followers answered his cheer with valorous shouts, and ever and anon, as they saw him enact some piece of great bravery, would they strive to follow his example. Fiercer and hotter grew the action—the English would suffer nothing to repulse them; every obstacle—and there were many which were tremendous—they surmounted; the town gates, which had been besieged with a battering ram, were at length beaten down and fell with a tremendous crash, burying many of the unfortunate Flemings beneath them. The English rushed in pell-mell and carried all before them. It was in vain they were opposed with undaunted bravery; they fought with such resistless impetuosity nothing could withstand them. The Flemings and French gave ground on all sides, became panic-stricken, and at length turned and fled. They were hotly pursued; they separated into small bands and tried to gain the open country, but were everywhere prevented. They were commanded to lay down their arms, but obstinately refused, and continued fighting until band after band were cut to pieces: the slaughter was frightful; they preferred death to submission, and death they received. The streets ran with blood—every man refusing to submit was cut down; none were spared but those who yielded themselves prisoners.

Wat Tyler had closely followed Sir Walter Manny—had nobly divided with him the glory of the day, so far as feats of prowess were concerned, and many times during the contest had received words of enthusiastic praise from the knight, which made his heart glow and his bosom swell when he heard them, and strive still more to snatch laurels from the hand of death. He felt during the fight no touch of dismay. When even the danger was greatest—when death was stalking frightfully around him—his only thoughts were to excel, or at least equal, Sir Walter in his deeds—to do everything which should make him worthier of Violet. He had her sweet figure always before him. She was, to his vision, like a tutelary spirit, who was waving him on to happiness by the terrible path through which he was cutting his way. He saw her beautiful form, white and shining as an angel of light, among the dancing spears and fluttering banners before him, and ever as he advanced she receded; but still was she before him to lead him on until his perilous probation had passed, and he had won what he was so ardently striving for. He felt no longer as a mere youth; he was among men, doing the deeds of men as a man; the weakness—girlishness, perhaps, is the more correct term—he had so many times hitherto shown, the result of not mixing with men of the calibre of those he was now among, was to be by that day's actions changed into the

firmness which his native strength of mind so well enabled him to possess. He felt the change within him even while he fought—he felt that henceforth he should think, act, be, and bear, as became a man. No matter how few his years, that day's deeds drove away all that pertained to boyhood, save the freshness of feeling, which in a true heart never fades, though grey hairs may crown the head of him who owns it. He saw no danger in the path before him, though spears, swords, and other deadly weapons were levelled at him in all directions—feared nought; he saw only that Sir Walter Manny accomplished wonders, and that to gain Violet, he must do as well; he tried hard to emulate his deeds, and did not fail: the soldiers acknowledged that. He was a stranger among them, but a valuable one; and many an old warrior shouted his praise as he witnessed his deeds; he, however, never heeded it, but as the fight grew fierce and thick around him, as the struggle became terrific—as Sir Walter Manny, waving his huge battle axe, thundered out his war-cry—which, as yet, had never been raised on any spot where success had not followed—as the clashing of weapons, the shrill clamour of trumpets, shouts, oaths, dying cries, and other fierce noises filled his ears, he muttered to himself, "Violet! Violet!" and with a heart nerved to meet anything, held on his way resistlessly.

Michael, who possessed not the mental capabilities of Wat, was neither so elevated in his hopes, nor so emulous of great deeds, yet did he acquit himself right gallantly; his courage was unimpeachable and his dexterity considerable. He followed in Wat's steps, fought as he fought, and if he endeavoured to imitate him, it was because it was Wat he was copying. He did as he saw his friend do, not because he hoped to make himself equal to him, but because he esteemed everything which Wat did to be right and proper, and by coming as near to it as he could, he believed he should be best pleasing him who, of all persons living, save Flora, he most wished to please; he therefore exerted himself to the best of his ability, nor thought once that his desire to satisfy the friend of his heart might bring him an early grave. He was well supported by one who made the most strenuous efforts to accomplish all that could be, by man, done in such a field—and that was John Chandos, the esquire. Fiercely did he lay about him; his whole soul was in the action—there was no other thought possessing him. He fought most enthusiastically; slashed and thrust with all the vigour a stalwart frame would enable him; he echoed the war-cry of Sir Walter the instant it quitted his lips, and in a tone no less loud, he cheered on the soldiery, leaped into the thickest of the fight, as if under the influence of the most ecstatic delight, and cut through everything opposed to him. He had kept close to Wat Tyler, and occasionally uttered a stentorian hurra, on observing our hero perform some feat he deemed worthy of praise; he flourished his weapon, and tried something immediately to rival it; and thus, Sir Walter striving to keep the brightness of his name untarnished, Wat exerting himself to equal his every act, Michael to do the best he could, and John Chandos to do more than ever was done by man before—these four set an example which, being well followed, completely gained the victory.

The defeated foe fled on all sides, and were pursued even into houses; so, the troops being divided into small bands, Wat and Michael got separated from Sir Walter Manny and John Chandos; but nevertheless continued as if they were still all together, until the complete overthrow of the Flemings rendered further fighting unnecessary. Then, for the first time, Wat began to perceive the horrors which were attached to warfare. The soldiers were entering and pillaging the houses, subjecting the inhabitants to the merciless usage with which the conquering troops of all countries visit the unfortunate townspeople they have defeated. The blood, heated to an unnatural degree by the excitement of deadly conflict, incites the ignorant trooper to deeds which, even he, brute as he is, in his cooler moments would never be guilty of. Wat shuddered and sickened as he saw men hurled from windows, and heard the piercing, heartrending, unheeded shrieks of females; but sympathise as much as he would, he had no power to restrain them, and now his blood was in a degree cooled, he almost doubted whether he had not been mistaken in the path he had chosen. But he had scarce time to reflect; scenes were being enacted round him which chilled his blood. He saw females flying in a state of maddened frenzy, pursued by ruthless soldiers, and here and there a man or youth would stand up to protect—it might be a sister, a wife, a betrothed, at least a countrywoman—but were instantly and remorselessly cut down. Wat felt his blood boil as he witnessed these horrid acts, and could barely restrain himself from interfering; but they were so numerous as to prove at once to him the folly and inutility of even raising a finger in their behalf—so he turned to Michael and said,—

"In the heat of the fight, Michael, the thought crossed me, that I could henceforth look on anything with all the firmness of the manliest heart, but here are scenes which pain and appal me. Let us away, I cannot stand here passively and look on; if I remain longer, I shall only be interfering in what I cannot prevent, and perhaps create some confusion it would be prudent to avoid."

"With all my heart," replied Michael. "I cannot bear to look at the merciless rascals, though I do fight on the same side—come away. I suppose this is always done; I know the French have done it to our people, and this is, therefore, retaliation, but it is very horrid to see."

"How now, comrades?" cried one of three soldiers of Sir Walter Manny's troop, who came up hastily to where they stood; "why are you loitering here when there is such plenty of booty to be had? Ah! I see you are both young hands, or you would not have been standing here doing nothing. Come, lads, follow me; I saw you both fight like true men, and I am an old hand that say it, and wouldn't say it if I did not mean it. Come! after me, my brave boys! I know this same Cadsant well; I've been here often. I'll take you to the house of an old miserly goldsmith; he is an usurer—no end to his money, I know; the house is in an out-of-the-way spot, and not likely to be found by any of our people; but I know well where it is; we'll make the old miser pour forth his merks; comrades, there's some pretty wenches there too, lads; what think you? that I aint a friend to you—eh, I should like to know that?"

"Come, Bullfric, we lose time," urged one of his comrades, impatiently; "we shall have Sir Walter about us, and you know he won't let us touch a woman or pillage after the battle is over, if he's near. I heard his trumpet just now, and saw some of our fellows hastening to answer it; he is sure to be on a sharp look-out after us, and if he catches any of us disobeying his orders, you know what the penalty will be?"

"Well, friends, will you join us? yea or nay, at once," said Bullfric to Wat and Michael.

"Yea!" returned Wat, quickly, as if he had come to a sudden resolution on hearing the soldier's speech

to Bullfric; "Come along, Michael," he added, and shouldering his sword with a significant look, which Michael appeared readily to understand, for he nodded as he followed his example, and mixing with the soldiers, they accompanied Bullfric to the miser's residence.

CHAPTER II.

"And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is—"

HAMLET.

"My shame and guilt confound me,—
Forgive me, Valentine; if hearty sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
I tender it here; I do as truly suffer,
As e'er I did commit."

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

"Away: I do condemn mine ears that have
So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,
Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not
For such an end as thou seek'st."

CYMBELINE.

"Then came wand'ring by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood: and he shriek'd out aloud—"

KING RICHARD III.

WHEN Sir Walter Manny surmised that, were another Violet in existence, and she were to fall in the way of Wat Tyler, and he, in Violet's presence or to her knowledge, paid her the same devoted attention which she had hitherto received from him, she would not be long in discovering that her affection was somewhat more than sisterly, he was not far wrong. Wat's absence had caused her to make a discovery of what she did not exactly suspect existed, it was, that Wat was as necessary to her happiness as she could possibly be to his; she was conscious of being exceedingly attached to him, but not to the extent which his departure proved her to be; she believed that he loved her as no maiden was ever loved before, his every act made it appear, and she to herself confessed there was none on earth so dear to her as him; but with this confession came an idea that there might be—that, indeed, if Providence had blessed her with a brother, he would have been loved by her as much as was Wat; there were no circumstances, until very recently, which occurred to make her think otherwise; but the painful change which passed over Sir Walter Manny's features when, on their return to Brenchley after he had rescued her, she spoke so fondly of Wat, led her at once to reflect that if he, who was comparatively a stranger, could feel anguish at the mention of one to whom he supposed she had given her heart, what must be Wat's feelings if circumstances should separate them for ever? Her estrangement from her parents had, as she grew older, been a source of frequent thought—of hope that a time would come when she should once more be enfolded in their embrace; and, if such a happy event was to transpire, and they found it necessary to have other views for her than meeting with Wat, what would be her suffering if she were taken from him for ever—she for whom he looked forward, she knew, with such fond anticipations? Her heart sunk within her as she pursued the reflection, and then she laid the little plan which cost her so many tears, such a hard struggle, for she would not have him think her at least ungrateful for the unremitting kindness he had always displayed. The plan, it has been shown, fell to the ground when he altered his bearing towards her, and when in taking his farewell they had plighted their faith; then, too, came the discovery that had father, mother, all the world striven to turn her from him, then she would have clung to him and never changed, let the influences employed be what they might. She knew not until now, in fact, that she loved him with all her soul, and the separation she had to thank for helping her to the knowledge. She grew very sad and dispirited at first, when his absence, which she felt as a *presence*, constantly recurred to her; but though gentle, and quiet, and thoughtful in nature and manner, she possessed too much sense, too much consideration, to trouble others with her sadness; she therefore roused herself from the despondent state in which she had at first fallen, and appeared cheerful and calm, keeping what she really felt in her own bosom, to be given way to only when alone. There was another cause, also, which made her call upon such energies as she possessed, and that was, the state into which Flora's excessive grief had thrown her: the poor girl had so abandoned herself to the anguish caused by Michael's departure, that it had produced a raging fever, accompanied by delirium. To her Violet paid the most constant attention, waiting upon her incessantly, and watching by her patiently when others were fast locked in repose; there was nothing her situation required Violet did not obtain for her, or aught given to allay the burning thirst, or cool the hot brow or parched lips, which her gentle hand did not administer. For some time her life was despaired of; but at length unceasing care and kindness, and the assistance of a youthful constitution, prevailed, and the extremity passed away, leaving the hitherto pretty, high-spirited, giddy Flora, a wasted, powerless shadow. The care which had robbed death of his prey was in no degree abated until she was so far restored as to be able to quit her room and once more breathe the fresh air, to which she had been for three long weeks a stranger. While in a state of delirium her whole thoughts and words were directed to Michael; she was always supposing that he was in some violent danger—some frightful position of which he was unconscious, and which she endeavoured to make him acquainted with, but without, as it appeared, his hearing her. She would scream almost frantically as she fancied he was incurring the danger from which she was desirous of saving him. Her shrieks might be heard far off. Michael—Michael!—it was always Michael while her brain was wandering; but when she was restored to sanity his name passed not her lips; not once did she utter a word which would have led to the mention of his name: had they never met she could not have been more silent respecting him. She said many things to comfort her mother, who hung weeping over her when she lay in that enfeebled state, after the dangerous fever had passed away, and was constant in uttering a profusion of thanks to Violet for all she had done for her. She knew what she had suffered, but never reverted to the cause while on that weary bed she lay. She had not even inquired for Wat, though she knew him to be so constant a visitant—though she remembered he had departed on a mission for her, and should long ere this have returned. At times she would, on overhearing Ethelbert and Halbert converse in the apartment beneath her, listen attentively, as if to catch the sound of some expected voice; but after holding her

breath for a short time, to enable her sense of hearing to be more acute, she would turn her face disappointedly and a little fretfully away, but she said nothing: a footstep upon the stair had the same effect upon her,—but never during the time she was slowly recovering did the name of Michael cross her lips. Violet was surprised at this, and wondered at her strange silence, but feared to mention his name, for she had nothing to say of him but Wat's ill success, and as the intelligence might cause a relapse, she thought it best to keep it until Flora herself inquired for it.

The first time Flora ventured from the cottage since her illness was late in the afternoon of a day which had been exceedingly beautiful; a soft breeze tempered the heat which the sun had created, and rendered the air sweet and cool. It was just such a clear, calm time, which is so delicious to those whom illness or confinement of any nature has kept prisoner in-doors. Violet accompanied her, and they strolled gently to the spot where Violet had parted from Wat; she led Flora there, because—but wherefore should she say why? it may easily be surmised. It was not the first time she had visited it since his departure, but it was the first time she had been accompanied thither; she, however, said nought of the matter, and on reaching it, they both seated themselves upon the bank, among its luxuriant wild flowers; for some time neither spoke a word, each was too much engrossed with their own thoughts, but at last Violet broke silence, and said—

"It would be difficult, dear Flora, to find words to tell thee how great is my gratification at seeing thee once more restored to health. I hope, most sincerely, that such a terrible visitation may never again afflict thee."

Flora returned no answer to this kind speech, and Violet looked in her face to see whether she had been heard, but saw that Flora's thoughts were far away, that not one word had caught her ear; her eyes were swimming with tears, and her lips were quivering with emotion. Violet guessed what was passing in her mind, and turning her eyes away, did not repeat her words. It was no time for congratulations, and any attempt at consolation would only be adding fuel to fire, so she remained quiet until the depression on her spirits should pass away. After a little while she felt Flora take her hand and press it, and she turned her kind eyes gently upon her to see the poor girl's sad face and weeping eyes directed to her, as though she was about to utter the thoughts oppressing her; she returned the pressure of her hand, and then, in a low, sobbing voice, Flora said—

"He has not come, Violet; he has not come: he will not—I can see too well he will not. I thought, too, that he would have come back. I did think that, but he has not. Oh, Violet! had he wronged me far—far beyond what I have him, and he had been as I have been, I would have forgotten all, and have come back. I would—indeed I would; but he has left me for ever, and I shall never see him again. I have deserved it, I know I have; but I thought he would have forgiven me, for he was always kind and good to me—always ready to forgive my ill-treatment of him, when I confessed myself in the wrong. But now he is changed—his heart is turned from me; he will not see me—he will not forgive me: and yet I was but thoughtless, and would have died for him: I would, Violet, I would—and never, never been so unforgiving to him!"

She leaned her head on Violet's shoulder as she sobbed out the last words, and was quite overcome by her feelings. Violet spoke soothing words to her, cheered her, and led her to receive, more patiently than might be expected, the real cause of Michael's non-return, at the same time acquainting her with the step Wat had taken, and, in the hope of lessening her grief, tried to persuade her that she had as much cause for sorrow as her, in being thus parted from Wat, whose very intention in quitting her would endanger the probability of their meeting again. His very efforts to gain a good name would be constantly placing his life in the greatest hazard—a life which it was so essential to her future happiness should be preserved.

"Oh, Violet!" said Flora, when she ceased speaking, "but you did not part in anger, or any difference of feeling, did you?"

"No," replied Violet, "but the sad chance of not meeting again is not less painful."

"But I could bear that better," exclaimed Flora, earnestly, "if he had not left me with anger—in unkindness. I could better bear to hear of his death, if I had known that my inexcusable silliness had not thrown him into the danger. But now, Violet, if I was to learn he had been slain, I know not what would become of me—I should go distracted; every spot I looked upon would remind me of his fate, and that I had caused it,—as it does now, Violet—as it does now."

"But what if you were to quit it, Flora?" asked Violet.

"Quit Brenchley? Quit *here?*" cried Flora, looking up through her tears with surprise.

"Yes," returned Violet. "Do you not think if you were away from the spot where every object brought to your memory he who is away, then your sadness would be much lessened."

"No! oh, no, Violet!" exclaimed Flora, quickly. "Sad as the thoughts would be which it brought, still it would be some consolation to stroll where his footsteps had wandered, sit where he had rested himself, visit again and again the places he had loved, and look untiringly on the objects he had found pleasure in gazing on. No, Violet, no—I do not wish to leave it. It is his birth-place; it was here he passed all his happy hours; it was here he lived, and now there can be no place on earth like it to me. I could never leave it."

"Not for a time? I will not say for ever, but only while he is away, dear Flora; for he will come back, and be to you again as he has been, I am sure. Don't shake your head so despondingly, for I feel convinced I prophecy no more than will happen."

"I pray fervently your prophecy may come to pass; but if I left here, where should I go? I know of no place nor friends I could visit, if I left here."

"I wish you to accompany me."

"You, Violet? why—how—you are not going to quit Brenchley?"

"I am, and very shortly, and I should wish you to come with me."

"To the end of the world, dear Violet; anywhere with you, who have been so very, very good and kind to me."

"Thanks, dear Flora! I thought I should not have to make my request in vain. I have obtained the consent of thy parents, and when you are sufficiently restored, we shall commence our journey."

"And whither go you?"

"I do not yet know. The brother of my foster-father has lately been restored to him, and he—as well as I can understand, for they are very secret—possesses a knowledge of my parents, and I suspect that our intended journey is to restore me to them. I begged them to suffer me to take you with me, and

they consented, therefore when you are well enough to bear the fatigue of the journey we shall depart."

"But suppose Wat and Michael should return in our absence—how will they know what has become of us?"

"Our destination will be entrusted to Wat's father, therefore should they return they will know where to come in quest of us; but we will talk that over anon. Let us return, thou'rt not strong enough yet to bear the night air. Come, lean on me, and by the goodness of Heaven all will yet be well!"

Violet then arose, and, extending her arm to Flora, assisted her to do likewise, and then she passed her arm affectionately round her waist and kissed her tenderly. The tears rushed into Flora's eyes as she experienced this sweet behaviour, but she could not trust herself to say a word—her heart was too full; so she pressed warmly the hand which held hers, and like two loving gentle sisters they returned to the cottage from whence they came.

It so happened that upon the same evening Ethelbert and Halbert Evesham walked together through the village, and for the first time since Wat's departure, paid a visit to his parents. They had scarcely received the kind greeting with which they were welcomed, when both, with a start of unfeigned astonishment beheld Martin du Bois seated languidly by the hearth, upon which, purposely for him, blazed a fire. Each simultaneously gave an exclamation of surprise and disgust as they perceived him, and Ethelbert, bending his stern brows, said, in a harsh tone—

"The reptile hath yet escaped his doom. Why, how is't, Martin Tyler, thou dost disgrace thy honest roof by sheltering so foul a thing as yon sickly wretch—one whose crimes make his existence a burden to nature?"

"It is the same question which Wat asked of me when he first saw this youth faint and helpless here, and as I answered him, so I will reply to thee," said Wat's mother, advancing to Ethelbert, on hearing his question. "He was placed in my charge on the verge of death. Unknowing who or what he was, I promised the shelter of my roof, and such succour as it was in my power to bestow. Our word once pledged remains unbroken, whatever inducements there may be to violate it. The youth may have been very wicked—no doubt he has, and if I had known as much when the shelter of my roof was requested for him, I might have refused; but as I did not, I consider my pledge sacred, and while he remains he shall be safe from harm or ill."

"And how will he requite thy kindness, good dame?" returned Ethelbert, with a glance of scorn at Martin du Bois. "Even as he returned Halbert's. How did he repay him all the kind attention he received? Why, by seeking to dishonour his foster-child; and, after being released from a position in which, had he remained much longer, a frightful death must have ensued, endeavoured to slay him. Dost thou think he will be more grateful to thee than to Halbert? To thee, when he must know it was thy son who fought and disarmed him in the forest, and, binding him to a tree, left him for the wolves to devour—the very strait from which Halbert delivered him, and for which his gratitude taught him to obtain by stratagem his sword, and then stab him in the back."

"My son?" ejaculated Wat's mother, shuddering at Ethelbert's words. "Did Wat encounter this youth, and treat him as you have said?"

"Aye did he!" replied Ethelbert, "and right nobly he did it. He knew of his interview with Grif, and his infamous purpose. That was the occasion of his *punishment* of the wretch. Now that you are aware how execrable a scoundrel your roof covers, you will no longer extend your shelter to him, but resign him to my keeping, that he may receive the reward of his villany. This time he shall not escape."

"You will pardon me, sir; he is not yet in health to enable him to quit my roof," said Wat's mother.

"In health!" scornfully echoed Ethelbert.

"Aye, sir, in health," exclaimed Martin Tyler, speaking firmly; "my assistance, my hospitality is extended to him until he is sufficiently restored to be able to defend himself; nor will I, under any circumstances, suffer it to be infringed, be his crimes tenfold more monstrous than those you have narrated, while he is my guest. I can and do regret it is not bestowed upon a worthier object, but the faith of my hospitality must not be broken, though even the rejection of one who is proved to be an undoubted villain be the temptation. He is my guest, sir; and while he is so he is safe, so far as my protection shields him; when he has departed hence, my duty hath ceased, and my interest in his safety also."

"My good host," exclaimed Martin du Bois feebly, "I thank thee most sincerely for thy warm and friendly interference; fear thou not a time will ever come that I shall forget your present kindness to me, or that I will not in every way strive to make thee such grateful return for thy unexampled hospitality as so honest a man as thee may be proud to receive——"

"Thou?" contemptuously uttered Ethelbert.

"And though it was thy son who placed me in a situation I shudder even to remember, harbour no thought that at any time I will seek to revenge myself for the deed," he continued, unheeding Ethelbert's interruption, "not only in consideration of thy great kindness to me, but inasmuch as I am too well satisfied that I richly merited the punishment he inflicted."

"To hear the fox speak of sparing the lion!" sneered Ethelbert.

"And now, a word with thee, thou relentless being," he cried, with sudden energy, turning to Ethelbert.

"Speak, caitiff! but hope not to smooth my just loathing of thee by trim words," exclaimed Ethelbert.

"I shall not attempt it. You are the same being whom I encountered in the forest some time since, enveloped in a black mantle, with thy face masked? Thou didst show me a green, crawling, living snake, twining and writhing up thy arm, when I guessed thou wert a spirit?"

"Well," uttered Ethelbert, in a low, but strangely sepulchral tone.

"It is the voice," muttered Martin, with a strong shudder; and then continued more loudly, "It was thou, when afterwards I did doubt that thou wert aught supernatural, who seized me and fastened me in a tree, to suffer a night of intense agony?"

"Well," uttered Ethelbert, in the same tone.

"And when extricated by Grif of the Bloody Hand, and crawling feebly to quit the forest, didst dart from a clump of brushwood, shout some terrible words in my ear, and bury thy dagger in my breast?"

"Thou hast guessed rightly," exclaimed Ethelbert, with somewhat of exultation in his voice; "and now for the purport of thy question?"

"To know the reason why thou hast pursued me so vindictively; to know *who* thou art, whom my father, as thou hast said, has wronged, and why thou dost still follow me, seemingly contented with nothing but my death?"

"Does not thy trembling conscience tell thee why I have sought to punish thee, and why I will. Who I am that thy father wronged, concerns thee not; that wrong will be settled between him and I. I seek not

to visit upon thee the revenge he created; thine own acts to those who are dear to me is motive enough for my conduct to thee. But thus much thou mayest know, that when thy father was in the pleniture of his power, it was I who caused him to be hurled from it; it was I who, when he slaughtered our late king, laboured incessantly until there were blood-hounds on his track. I have clung to him pertinaciously, and though he has for a time eluded me, it shall not be long ere I hunt him down, until his head is severed from his trunk upon the scaffold."

"Look you, oh, iron-hearted man, whom nought

but blood will satisfy; whate'er the wrong my father has done thee, it matters not how great it be, thou hast been already fearfully, fully avenged; for what acts I, too, have been weak and wicked enough to commit, thou hast measured me out full punishment, and I hold the debt fully acquitted for him and for myself: and had I now strength sufficient, and still hear thee utter such remorseless sentiments against my father's safety, I would take my sword, and never quit thee until thou or I had perished. Esteem this no empty boast; I know what thou hast done, I know how thou didst subdue me in the forest, but thou hadst there assistance which should not now avail thee."

"Thy coward fears," suggested Ethelbert, with a curling lip.

"If so you term my doubts of the earthliness of your nature, which the mysterious circumstances under which I met, as well as heard of you, led me to entertain; but they exist no longer. Mine is not the cowardly nature you imagine. The man does not live who dare say in my hearing, were I not, as now, crushed down by an enfeebled frame, that my father's life stood in danger from him, without my seeking to render the execution of his threat impossible by his death."

"Thou shalt have the opportunity," said Ethelbert. "Thy bravery shall be employed when thou art at thy strongest. Such ability as nature has given thee to defend thyself thou shalt exercise, and still will thou cry to me for mercy."

"Not if thy sword's point were penetrating my heart," said Martin, with energy. "I abide the time, and whate'er the issue, I crave no quarter, and—and——"

"Will yield none?" suggested Ethelbert.

"Even so," he replied; then turned to Halbert, saying, "That I have basely—villanously done thee wrong, Halbert Evesham, I deny not. I ask not thy forgiveness; for such conduct as mine to thee is not to be forgiven, and the gentle, affectionate-hearted Vio——

"Pollute not her spotless name with thy vile lips," harshly and hastily interrupted Ethelbert.

"You are right, it would be pollution," said Martin, without displaying any anger at Ethelbert's words, "but I would acknowledge I feel my baseness sit very heavy upon my conscience. I have, since the commission of those acts, been several times upon the verge of death. In those dread times, when the conscience speaks out undisguisedly, my wickedness stood fearfully before me, and I firmly resolved that were my life to be spared, I would make every reparation in my power; that, if there was any method of showing my contrition, I would do it, whatever be the severity of the trial. Halbert, I humble myself before thee to the dust for what I have done. I bow my head in shame and sorrow that I could ever so have injured thee, thou gentlest and kindest of men. I repeat, I ask not for thy pardon, for the boon is too great to hope for; but a day may yet come when you shall know how deeply and bitterly I repent my vileness, and how sincere is my regret that the intense love I bear to that gentle being, thy foster-child, led me to commit sins never imagined by me before."

"Could I believe thy penitence sincere," exclaimed Halbert, seeming affected by the words and manner of Martin, "I would——"

"Hold!" interrupted Ethelbert, "promise nothing. I would as soon place faith in a wolf as in John Maltravers. Trust him not; let him make what protestations he pleases, but wait for deeds ere you believe his words."

"And deeds he shall have, as shalt thou, thou ruthless man!" said Martin, with a frown upon his brow. "Do not suffer thyself to be prejudiced so entirely against me by thy unrelenting companion——"

"My brother!" uttered Halbert, as if to restrain any offensive epithets Martin might attempt to use.

"Thy brother?" he echoed, with strong surprise.

"Aye, his brother!" exclaimed Ethelbert. "Dost thou see aught to make thee change thy tone?"

"I see that one is all gentleness, the other all stern ferocity," replied Martin.

"And who made me what I am?" cried Ethelbert, with sudden vehemence. "Who changed me from mildness to bloodthirstiness? who changed my nature from calm placidity to fiery revengefulness? Thy father! thy base—but I am a fool to suffer a miserable wretch like thee to make me speak thus. Go to—enough has passed between us. Listen to me, John Maltravers. When thou hast recovered, such chance as thy strong arm and thy skill will give thee, to save thee from my weapon, thou shalt have, but nothing more. Seek not to escape, it will be in vain. The same vigilance which prevented thee putting thy infernal schemes into execution will be exercised still, and thy every motion watched. Thou shalt not escape me again."

"I shall make no effort, never fear," returned Martin, haughtily. "When my health is restored, thou wilt find me quite as willing to meet thee as thou wilt be to attack me. I have no words more for thee: my next language shall be spoken with my sword."

"Lying braggart!" muttered Ethelbert between his teeth.

"But to thee, Halbert, I would say this much," he continued, unnoticing Ethelbert's mutter: "I must implore thee, ere thou dost depart, to at least believe my penitence is sincere; and when thy thoughts may wander to me, think only that a blind ungovernable passion led me to act so criminally—that it was not my nature, but that now I have awakened to a full sense of the insanity of my conduct, and would sacrifice everything to repair the error I have been guilty of. But judge of me as you will, still I pray thee most earnestly to believe that my repentance is sincere."

"I know nought of thee, youth, as yet but treachery," exclaimed Halbert, "base, ungrateful requital of good-will displayed towards thee; thy nature, I fear, cannot be of the good quality you would now have me believe, or you would not have suffered wicked impulses so fearfully to have misled you; however, through the bounty of the All-beneficent I escaped the evil thou didst intend me, and so far as I am concerned I forgive thee——"

"Noble Halbert," exclaimed Martin du Bois, enthusiastically.

"But with my forgiveness ends all personal intercourse between us; for the future I will strive to forget we ever met, and shouldst thou think of me, let thy reflections make thee thankful that my murder does not lie heavy on thy soul."

"I know that I have acted so unworthily as to deserve to be banished from thy memory—it is but just that I should be; but if the Author of our being were to be only just, there would be none saved. As He extends His mercy to all His meanest, criminal as well as virtuous, creatures, do not thou be less merciful; turn not thy heart completely from me, but let me prove to thee that I am not by nature what thou hast full reason to judge me to be."

"Urge me no further; we meet no more but as entire strangers," exclaimed Halbert, decisively.

"Waste no more words upon him," said Ethelbert

impatiently, "let us away, my sight sickens at him. Farewell, good Martin Tyler; good even, my good dame: when thy task of hospitality is fulfilled, and thy hearth clear of its present incumbrance, I will return and speak to thee of the things for which to-night I sought thy dwelling. Come, Halbert." So saying, he passed out of the cottage, and his brother, after bidding the dame and her husband farewell, was preparing to follow his example, when Martin du Bois called to him to stay.

"One moment more," he cried; "I will not long detain thee; I trust you will eventually see fit to alter your determination against me, but I leave that for a future time; now I would beg of thee most earnestly, most imploringly, that thou wilt speak to Violet of my contrition."

"Look you, Martin du Bois, I am quiet and placid in my nature, but there are some things which will rouse me to the fiery 'haviour of the fiercest. Beware you how you utter her name in my presence, or thou mayest find I too may seek thy life."

"But hear me, Halbert! I know the full extent of my crime—I feel it all, and would make some atonement; all I ask is that you say to her my conduct was occasioned by my love for her——"

"Thy love for her!" echoed Halbert, contemptuously.

"Aye, my adoration, even unto frenzy. It was the hopelessness of my case made me seek to employ force, where free confidence was denied. I loved—do love her still—would shed my blood as water for her now and at all times; and though I have so much erred, I would have her know that it was love for her that caused it—that love for her made me the villain where it might have made me a hero."

"Love for her!" again repeated Halbert, scornfully; "was that the way to show thy love, to use a base stratagem, that thou mightest tear her from her home, and inflict by brute, villanous force, a most heartless, shameful wrong upon her,—blighting, destroying the fairest flower God ever planted upon the earth. Go to, go to! call not thy infamous passion love for her; true love seeks to raise to the highest the object of its adoration, not destroy it. I would not do the gentle child so great an unkindness as to let thy name fall from my lips and grate upon her ear——"

"Do you deny me so small a boon? thou whose every act is kindness."

"I do, most imperatively. Stay me no longer; we part now, for ever. I repeat I forgive thee, but I expunge thee from my memory, as I root out a loathsome weed from among sweet flowers. I speak to thee no more. My good dame Tyler, I wish to confer with thee upon a certain subject, and will feel glad if thou wilt favour me with thy presence at my dwelling at thy convenience to-morrow."

"I will not fail to attend to thy wish," replied Dame Tyler.

"I thank thee. Farewell, my good friends."

"You are fixed in your determination not to speak to Violet of my sorrow for all she suffered through me," cried Martin du Bois, as Halbert was passing out of the cottage.

"I will not speak one word of thee to mortal more, so please Heaven," uttered Halbert, as he disappeared.

"And yet I will triumph over them, despite every obstacle," muttered Martin, as soon as he had quitted. "I will yet tear out the heart of the bloodhound who has thus hunted down my father and brought disgrace upon my name: I will—I will. A bitter revenge I will yet have—a most bitter one. I would that my affected abjectness had passed current. No matter; I will yet give the old fool cause to think of me, if I leave him the opportunity of thinking at all, and bring that proud girl at my feet, low, humbly, miserably low; she shall learn what it is to be a suppliant yet, or I am no true Maltravers. Curse upon the weakness which, spite of myself, makes me at times the cowardly fool I am; had it not been for that, she might have been mine. Would that the priest who first robbed me of my strength of mind were in hell, for filling my mind with such horrors. No matter—let the chance come over again, and not all the fiends of darkness shall step between me and my prize; I'll glut my soul with revenge—I will—I will!"

He continued muttering for some short time longer, until he sunk into a doze before the fire, in which he remained until darkness proclaimed it time for him, weak and enfeebled as he was, to seek repose. Neither Martin Tyler or his wife had interrupted his soliloquy, or taken the least notice of the conversation which had transpired between their guest and the two brothers; and now when, arousing himself from the slumbering state into which he had fallen, he requested them to lead him to his chamber, they obeyed: but uttered not a word until, as they were departing, he said—

"Do either of you good folks know aught concerning this brother of Halbert Evesham, who to-night accompanied him hither?"

They both replied in the negative.

"Has he ever before been in Brenchley?" he inquired, continuing the interrogation.

"I have never seen him until within these few days," replied Martin Tyler, "and I was living here long before Halbert Evesham came."

"And you know not who or what he is, or where he comes from?"

"No," was the reply.

"It is strange!" he muttered, and then continued aloud. "You overheard the colloquy which passed between us to-night, of course?"

Martin bowed his head assentingly, but spoke not.

"You heard him acknowledge that he had hunted my father down to the direst disgrace, and boast that he would never leave him until he had compassed his death—that he would also accomplish mine. Now, I confess that I have done Halbert Evesham and his foster-child some wrong, led away by the passions which are natural to youth, but certainly not to the extent which would give him or his brother a right to proceed to the extremity with which the latter has threatened me; and such other punishments as my acts have deserved have been paid me most adequately. Whatever the wrong be which this brother of Halbert's affirms was inflicted upon him by my father, I hold also to be fully avenged by the situation to which the blood-thirsty man's vengeance has reduced him. Were you both to know all the circumstances which have transpired, I am satisfied you would readily coincide in the opinion I am now expressing, and believe that no injury has been done without having its full and fair equivalent returned. I mention thus much to you, in order that the very great endeavours employed by both these men—your son, too, who doubtless was misled by them to think of me as he did—to so thrust me from your good opinion, that you may no longer evince to me the kindness you have hitherto displayed—that you may, deeming me one of the foulest beings upon earth, relax the care and attention which is fast restoring me to health, and, turning me from beneath your hospitable roof, undo in one act all the good you have so long been showing me. Let me beg of you, most imploringly,

not to be led away by what you have heard, or for one instant entertain the opinion that the benevolence I have received will ever by me be ungratefully returned. Judge not of me with the eyes of others; but as I act to you, so esteem me. I will detain you no longer from repose, but with reiterated thanks for all the favours I have received at your hands—with the strong assurance that they shall never be forgotten or remain unreturned—I wish you both good night."

The good couple returned his salute with a silent bend of the head, and then quitting his chamber, left him alone. He scarcely liked their taciturnity, and for a few minutes pondered upon it, trying to fathom its meaning; but, after a little while, he recollected that neither of them were by nature garrulous; and, as his speech had barely required answering, he made up his mind to think no more about it.

Divesting himself of his garments, he laid him down to sleep, but not to rest. No! dreams of the most horrible description harassed and tortured him the long night through—the fevered state of his blood conjured up visions the most frightful. No sooner were his eyes closed, and sleep had taken possession of him, than he was surrounded by hideous phantoms, demoniac visages grinning at him in all imaginable and unimaginable varieties of terrifying expressions. Whatever was most fearful presented itself before him — spectres, whose forms were undefined, but which the imagination found it awful to supply, stalked in grim array around him—noxious and loathsome reptiles, whose shapes the sight sickened at, writhed and twisted here and there, now advancing so close as to make him tremble at the cold, damp clamminess of their touch, then receding far away to give place to something more frightful still.

He seemed to be in the centre of a circle of horrors too tremendous to look upon and remain sane. He twisted and tossed about on the bed, rolled here and there groaning, the large drops of perspiration starting from every pore, and awoke shuddering, almost shrieking, in the extremity of his terror. The broad moon was shining with its cold blue light into the room, and its rays touching objects here and there gave them forms which his distempered imagination quickly made as horrible as those which his sudden awakening had released him from.

He muttered an Ave Maria, and buried his head beneath the clothes, cursing bitterly the fate which rendered him the victim of these terrible apparitions. By degrees he fell again asleep, to be again tortured by dreams no less fearful than those preceding, and then came the worst dream of all. Fearfully had Halbert's promise—when, believing himself mortally wounded by Martin in the dell, he had told him he would be ever present to him—been kept.

One night since that time had not passed without the terrible scene being enacted over again, with perhaps some addition which had increased its terrors; and once again he believed himself in the dell—once more did he thrust his sword through the body, but ere he could withdraw it he felt a hand stone-cold grasp his own, holding him with a grip of iron; and then Halbert turned slowly round, and fixed his cold, blue, glassy eyes upon his, making every drop of blood curdle in his veins, and every nerve quiver with horror. Then, again, the spectre slowly raised his white fingers, and the same sepulchral voice shouted the words in his ears which he could not efface from his memory, and which no species of art or perseverance could ever obliterate while he lived; and then he felt the phantom fling its icy fingers about his neck, saw its ghastly face advance close to his own, but his fright was so intense he was unable to shake it off until the horror became so tremendous nature could no longer sustain it, and again he awoke, exhausted and unrefreshed.

The morning's light had taken the place of the moon, and he felt a little relieved by its presence, but did not again try to compose himself to sleep; he, however, lay devising means whereby he should yet succeed in obtaining possession of Violet. The more he reflected upon what he had suffered through the failure of his former attempts, the more strengthened he grew in his determination of being in some way fully revenged. He ground his teeth hard as he remembered that from all he had received pain and contumely, and as yet had gained nothing; but he hugged himself in fond anticipation that he yet would—that he would wreak his vengeance upon all through Violet—that the wrongs and injuries he would do her should rend the hearts of those who had made him bodily and mentally suffer so much torture, with an agony so dreadful; he would be more than repaid for all he had undergone.

There was only one thing, and that was how to accomplish it. His brain was fertile in expedients; but, as each variety of scheme presented itself, it was rejected, as it might possess some flaw which, being detected, might incur the failure of the whole project, besides bringing upon him an extremity of punishment he had certainly every intention of avoiding. He could well foresee how excessively cautious he must be, and knew that he must evade meeting Ethelbert Evesham when he quitted Martin Tyler's cottage; for, though he might be successful in an encounter with him, it was not impossible he might himself be slain, and that was an event not at all to be desired or hazarded. Besides, even were he successful, his revenge would not be half so well gratified by Ethelbert's death, as it would be by wringing his heart with anguish; and he, therefore, resolved to quit the shelter he was under as soon as he was well enough, but sooner than would be expected, and then commence putting whatever plan he had decided upon into action.

He gloated over the events he promised fondly to himself that he would bring to pass; but perhaps he might not have been so sanguine had he been aware that the night previous, after Halbert Evesham had quitted the cottage, a quick ear had overheard his mutterings, collected every word he had uttered, not a tone even of which was lost, and that they were treasured up with the greatest care, with the most tenacious retentiveness, certainly not with the intention that they should remain unused.

CHAPTER III.

"PAIN.—As I took note of the place, it cannot be far where he abides.

"POET.—What's to be thought of him? Does the rumour hold for true that he is so full of gold?

"PAIN.—Certain." TIMON OF ATHENS.

"The city's taken—only part by part—
And Death is drunk with gore: there's not a street
Where fights not to the last some desperate heart
For those for whom it soon shall cease to beat."
DON JUAN.

"One's hip he slash'd, and split the other's shoulder,
And drove them with their brutal yells to seek
If there might be chirurgeons who could solder
The wounds they richly merited, and shriek
Their baffled rage and pain." IBID.

"A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,
Like to a lighted alabaster vase." IBID.

WAT TYLER and Michael followed Bullfric and his two companions towards the house of the old miserly goldsmith, which Bullfric had promised to lead them to, and which was, as he confidently asserted, to yield them a rich harvest of gold and beauty. There was certainly no time wasted on their road, for, urged by his two comrades, and fearful that though, as he had said, the house was in a retired spot, some one, by some cursed chance, might be before him, he went along at a rapid rate, closely followed by his two friends, while Wat and Michael dropped a little behind, done by Wat purposely, that he might exchange a few words with Michael respecting the errand upon which they were bound.

"These fellows," he little more than whispered, "will doubtless try to commit some infernal deeds, which, done to our fellow-country people, they would hotly resent, but think they have a perfect right, in their present situation, to enact them, as if what is an enormity in one is less so in another. I have already seen enough to make my blood run cold, but have had no opportunity of interfering where they were so numerous, and where the stronger hand and stronger voice of their leaders have not restrained them; but here is a case in which we may, perhaps, prevent a great deal of barbarity. The very terms on which we are invited to join it foretell what will ensue, unless there be an arm stretched forth to interfere and save; and if, out of all, we can save only one family, it is better than if all were to suffer."

"I guessed it was some feeling of that sort which made you join them," returned Michael, in the same tone. "Whatever you intend to do you will find me ready to second you in hand and heart. There's only three of them, and, if they refuse to do as you wish them, you can settle the one they call Bullfric, and I can, I think, manage the other two."

"I think we have already been in situations of greater danger than to fear encountering these three," replied Wat, smiling; "but, so long as they keep to mere booty, I will say nothing. If, however, they act over the scenes we have just witnessed, I shall side with the weaker, and will carry my point, or be cut down."

"I am quite ready to do as you do," said Michael, "that you know, and if it be two or ten I have to fight, I shan't flinch a peg so long as you stand up; and, if any accident should happen to you, why I shall stick up to them until they serve me the same, that's all."

"I know well I can depend upon you, Michael," answered Wat, "and when I ——"

"Come, lads, are you tired or lazy?" bawled out Bullfric, on perceiving how they had dropped behind. "Have you forgotten that I told you there was plenty of gold to be had, and plenty of wine, and pretty lips to sweeten the drink with?"

"Oh, let them stay behind," said the fellow who had previously urged on Bullfric, "there's enough in us three to enjoy all we shall find at this usurous dog's. I dare say we shan't want any assistance to divide the spoil. There won't be more than enough to satisfy us, I warrant; so let's keep on by ourselves, and make them look somewhere else for booty or women, if they want either."

"Turn back yourself," cried Michael, quickly, and a little hotly, "I shan't, nor will you *make* me. I have as much right to go to this miser's as you have, and I will; nor can you, or any dozen like you, stop me. How does that suit your palate?"

"You young hound, if you bandy such saucy words to me, you shall taste my cold steel," roared the fellow, "and see how that will suit *your* palate."

"It is not in your power to give me enough to taste," retorted Michael,

"How! you crowing churl!" cried the soldier, making towards him with a flourish of his sword, but Bullfric and Wat both interfered, and prevented the combat, which otherwise would at once have ensued.

"Come, come, Blase, you were always a greedy dog," exclaimed Bullfric; "let others have a bite as well as yourself; you have not done better to-day in the hot work than our young comrade here; he has earned his share of booty quite as well as you, and so don't try and take out of his mouth what he has as much right to as yourself. Besides, we are all of a family, all in the same troop, so don't be quarrelling about what you've neither of you got yet."

"I don't want to quarrel," replied Michael, "only I don't choose that any body shall tell me they'll make me do anything."

"A lad of spirit," said Bullfric. "I like your mettle well; you'll do credit to the troop if you are in it long enough, and pay attention to the instructions of an old soldier like myself. And you, too," he added, turning to Wat, "young warriors like you can't do better than place yourselves under the wing of one who's seen ten years' hard fighting in all parts of Europe."

"I thank you," replied Wat, quietly, "but I have a habit of thinking and acting for myself."

"Which the sooner you get rid of the better," said Bullfric.

"I am not of the same opinion," Wat replied.

"That may be," returned Bullfric, "but you will be."

"Um! I rather doubt it," said Wat.

"Then you'll make no soldier; for to be a good soldier, you must have no thought or opinion of your own. You must do as you are told, in every sense of the word. You must neither look, speak, walk, or act, but as your commanding-officer directs."

"In all things?" asked Michael, with surprise.

"In everything; you may follow your own desires in nothing unless it jumps with the commanding-officer's fancy. You must have no inclination of your own. Indeed, such a thing as having an inclination is unknown in the army now."

"But this only relates to matters of duty," observed Wat.

"To all things; you can only drink out of the vessel which suits the commanding-officer's fancy, eat off a platter or what not which he thinks right and proper; and if he chooses to injure you in every way, even the worst way that one man can injure

another, you must quietly kiss the rod that chastens you."

"But I would'nt," cried Michael.

"What would you do? What could you do?" retorted Bullfric. "When a man now a-days enters the army, he gives up all right to oppose wrong, oppression, insult, and injury to himself, upon pain of—"

"What?" inquired Michael.

"That which is worse to a soldier's feelings than death—disgrace. That is to say, supposing the offender to be a subordinate officer; but were he to be a common soldier, they would shoot him at once, without the smallest consideration of the provocation he might have received."

"Have you not overdrawn the picture?" inquired Wat.

"Not in in the least; it is as I say."

"Then I shall take no pains to continue my acquaintance with the army much longer," observed Michael; "I shall make the best of my way home as soon as I can."

"Don't flatter yourself that you will have the opportunity," laughed Bullfric, "you dare not leave until you have a proper discharge, and men are too scarce for what is to come, to have that granted easily."

"But the extraordinary doctrine you have just uttered, respecting the soldier being compelled to bear with everything, surely exists not in Sir Walter Manny's troop?" asked Wat, with some anxiety of manner.

"The law, by which the army as a body is governed, reigns the same in every troop—there is no distinction, the power of the commanding-officer in every one is the same; but we are fortunate in having one who would not stoop in any way to wrong the meanest member of the troop; he has no such littleness of character; therefore, we are safe from suffering the disadvantages under which such a law might otherwise place us."

"While you're preaching all this tirade, we're crawling like snails," exclaimed Blase. "I'd wager my head! that when we get to this old fellow's kennel, somebody has been there before us, and cleared it completely out. Answer all these questions some other time; those who would be soldiers should learn their duties before they enter the army, and not pester folks with questions at unseasonable times."

"God ha' mercy!" cried Bullfric, who was always glad of the opportunity of making himself Sir Oracle, and felt annoyed by Blase's remark; "one would think, to hear thee, that thou had'st everything to reply to, instead of not having been asked a question. Thou dost forget when thou didst first join the fighting trade, that thou didst go nigh to weary out my life with questions. Now, Blase, unless thou dost curb thy impetuosity, thou shalt return without touching a coin, a cup, or a lip; none but I know where this mine of wealth is hidden, I will most incontinently turn thee all back and keep the secret to myself."

"That's all very well," observed the second comrade, named Birn, "but because Blase happens to be more impatient than pleases thee, is no reason why we should be deprived of what we are so much longing for."

"Keep thy tongue from wagging so unneedfully," returned Bullfric, "we are within an hundred yards of the house. Now, before we enter, I have to premise, that one-fourth of the booty be mine, and that the miser's daughter fall also to my share, and that any other little advantage which may be afloat be as well resigned to me, in consideration of having *brought you* here."

"You want rather too much, don't you?" said Blase, hesitatingly.

"Thy greediness, Blase, was sure to suggest that remark; but I think my demand is not more just than moderate. What say you, comrades?"

"Quite as just as moderate," replied Wat, with a curling lip.

"I contend it's too much; I don't agree to it," said Blase.

"Nor I," seconded Birn.

"Don't you?" returned Bullfric, "then, my fine fellows, I don't show you the house."

"Oh! you said it was within an hundred yards, and we shall easily find it," said Blase.

"Try it," retorted Bullfric; "I have no fear that the very small piece of wit Heaven has blessed thee with will enable thee to discover anything far more easily found than that house; but do your best, find it out if you can; the neighbourhood has plenty of houses; you may hit on the right, and you may be a very long time ere you do; I may be wrong too, but I don't think it will be found by either of you in a very short time. But don't let what I say prevent you from trying: you have plenty of time before you, you know, so start off at once, and if you find it, keep to yourselves all that there is in it."

"Yes, but you know we have not got plenty of time," grumbled Blase.

"I think you had better agree to my proposition," said Bullfric, coolly; "a small share is better than no share at all; besides, the share you will get is more than you can carry away."

"Then how will you get yours away?" asked Blase, quickly.

"That's my affair; I have provided for that. Will you agree to my terms?"

"I suppose we must?" said Birn.

"I know you must; and you, greedy Blase, how say you?"

"Oh! I consent, on consideration that my share may have your refusal of any of the little advantages which you seem to expect."

"Greedy to the last. Well, it shall," answered Bullfric. Now then, keep close to me, and in a few minutes more we shall be in the old gentleman's dwelling."

He increased the pace at which he had been advancing, and, followed by his four companions, he took his way through an alley formed by a number of old dwellings seemingly deserted, and evidently in such a dilapidated condition that if they were not, they ought to be. Most of them were shut up, and such as were not, were little better than mere shells, which required but a little shaking to bring down, so completely did the once massive beams forming the roofs and flooring appeared decayed. The murmuring hum of the combat still sounded in their ears as they proceeded, and the streets they had passed through all bore tokens of the fray or preparations for it; but the quarter they were in looked as though it had not for some long period previous been peopled, or that the intelligence of the attack of the English upon the island had not yet reached it."

"Is the house in this alley?" inquired Blase.

"No," replied Bulfric. "Why do you ask? don't the appearance of these ancient edifices fill your mind with expectation and admiration, and your pockets with itching?"

"Oh no," replied Blase; "they look in such a miserably tottering condition that my head scarcely feels safe upon my shoulders; let us get out of it as soon as ever we can."

"You are very hard to please," answered Bulfric;

"I should'nt wonder next if you don't begin turning up your nose when you see the gold and jewels and massive plate of my old friend the jeweller."

"It will be with delight then," remarked Birn.

"It won't be disgust," said Blase; "but how did you become acquainted with this old miser's abode, if it is such an out-of-the-way place nobody can find it?"

"I will tell thee. When I was serving in another part of Flanders some seven or eight years ago, I fell in by accident with a very pretty little Flemish girl, named Katrine, and we so well agreed together that we got married."

"You got married, Bullfric!" cried Birn and Blase together, in great surprise.

"Aye, to be sure I did—regular priest, book, and ring, and all that sort of affair; we were made one in nothing less than a cathedral too. It was a marriage proper. However dexterous I was in sinister designs, she would not stand any nonsense; so, as I was truly attached to her, why, we were tied together one morning after low Mass."

"Well, but what has that to do with the miser?" asked Blase.

"You shall hear; I became acquainted with Katrine at Cassel; I served under the Count of Hainault, just after Philip of Valois was crowned King of France, and accompanied the expedition to Cassel; you know all about that fight, don't you?" he inquired, appealing to Wat Tyler.

"No," replied Wat, "I have not heard of it."

"Then you ought, for a most glorious affair of arms it was. We were encamped in three divisions before Cassel, which was garrisoned with sixteen thousand troops, all Flemings; King Philip commanded the first and largest, the King of Bohemia the second, and the Count of Hainault the third. Well, the town promised to hold out some time, therefore we were not quite so vigilant as we might have been, and one evening, thinking to surprise us, the Flemings divided themselves into three divisions, and issued as noiselessly as they could from the town; it was vespers, on St. Bartholomew's-day, and of course very nearly dark, when they approached; they attacked the tents of King Philip while he was at supper, served the King of Bohemia the same, and the third division attacked ours so suddenly and so fiercely that we had scarcely time to arm ourselves. Many a brave fellow was that night cut down without having in his hand a weapon to defend himself. Each of our three divisions was completely surprised; but that once over, and warmed into the work, we hammered away at the Flemish rascals in such furious style that they found they had made a mistake in their reckoning. The fellows fought bravely, as they did to-day, and once in for the prize they determined to win, or, losing it, lose life and all. The men on our side, too, fought desperately—so furiously that, in the space of one hour we won the fight, leaving twelve thousand Flemings dead upon the field. None of them fled, and such as were not then killed were taken prisoners—but before morning, they too were slaughtered; so out of the sixteen thousand, not one escaped. Well, that same night we marched into the town; it surrendered at once, and you may be sure the troops did not sleep on the ground that night; there was a great deal of riot and confusion, no little bloodshed, and a great deal of drunkenness, shrieking of women, shouting, and all such devilish noises as accompany the sacking of a town. Well, of course I looked about for my share of booty, and entered a house that promised something; I found, however, some one was before me; I heard the heavy tramp of a mailed foot running quickly up a flight of stairs, and the shrieks of a woman, whom I easily guessed he was pursuing. I, too, ran up stairs to join in the fun, and being more nimble-footed than he who was in advance of me, I soon overtook him, and we entered into a room close together; there was a damsel running to and fro in a state of distraction, and the moment we appeared she redoubled her shrieks, and wrung her hands in great bitterness; the fellow I followed rushed forward to seize her, but she eluded his grasp, and darted up to me; she threw her arms round me, and screamed to me, as I hoped for the mercy of the holy and living God, to save her; if I had a mother or sister, for their dear sakes to shield her from the clutches of the fellow who was endeavouring to seize her. I was just going to say that it was all fair and proper in war time, and that as he was first he had the greatest right to her, when I received a tremendous blow in the face from him, at the same time a question to know what business I had interfering with his property. That blow altered matters wonderfully. I conveyed my answer with a blow of my dagger, which wounded him, but not much, and then we went at it in right earnest terms. He was enormously large and tall, my superior in height, breadth, and strength, and he kept up a hideous grin, telling me every now and then he would cut me to pieces—and by my troth he nearly kept his word—for he slashed me terribly. I was not, however, backward in returning the compliment, and every wound that I gave him, he roared out that he would cut me down, but he did'nt. At last I grew tired, and as I found that he seemed as fresh as ever, though he was bleeding from twenty places, I gathered up all the strength I had left, and attacked him with such unexpected vigour, that I disarmed him, and then taking my time a little more over my work, I slew him. He took a long time to kill, but I did not mind that, for I owed him a great deal, and resolved to remain nothing in his debt. When the fight was done, and he lay stone-dead upon the floor, I looked about for the girl who had become mine, but I could not see her; and then I grew dizzy, my sight failed me, and then I recollect nothing more until I found myself upon a bed, and Katrine by my side crying over me. Well, after a little while I got well, and I found that the army had returned to Paris. I had been lying out of my senses for weeks on that bed——"

"Katrine was, I suppose, the young girl you saved from the trooper?" interrupted Michael.

"She was," replied Bullfric. "I was just going to tell you so. It seems that while we were fighting she went and hid herself, and when our combat was over, she crept out and found me senseless, but not dead. By herself she dragged me to a room where there was a bed, and though young, and timid too, she exerted herself to staunch my wounds, and succeeded. Alone she passed the night watching over me, and, in the morning, when Philip went through the town and gave strict orders that the inhabitants should not be further molested, her friends returned, and then I received every attention I could desire until I was restored."

"Well, but what has that to do with the miser?" interrupted Blase.

"Wait until I disclose it. I am not going to cut off my story just to please an impatient hound like you."

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Bullfric; but don't be so fond of calling me names; I don't like it, and I may resent it," said Blase, chafing.

"You are a fool, Blase, and you know it," retorted Bullfric. "You may resent, or not like it, or go to the devil, if you like. I don't care one bad half-groat for your resentment or you either."

"You're too impatient, Blase," said Birn. "Let him finish his story without interruption; he'll be all the quicker."

"Yes! but why should I submit to be called——"

"Be quiet, be quiet," cried Birn, "you only make matters worse. Be silent!"

"Let him gabble as much as he pleases, good Birn. He will not move me. He asked for the story, and this is his gratitude for obliging him. Well, when he asks me to tell him another tale, it shall do him good if I do. No matter, he has lost a treat in the finish of this story as it is."

"But you will finish it," said Michael, who felt rather interested in it.

"Not I, since it grows tiresome to friend Blase. I therefore think the best thing we can do is to return to Sir Walter."

"I think so too," said Wat, eagerly, hoping to turn them from their intended expedition.

"But I don't," cried Birn, quickly, "and I don't believe Blase is fool enough to wish so either."

"No," said Blase, "go on with your story, I won't interrupt you again. Only, just to oblige me, say Blase this, and Blase the other, and not hound and fool, and greedy and grumble-grizzle, and groat-grubber, and all such names. My name is Blase, and none of these."

"It ought to have been fire; but no matter, friend Blase, you shall be called by me nothing but Blase, until you are tired of it. Let me see, where did I leave off?"

"You was just restored to health," answered Michael. "I suppose Katrine was your nurse?"

"You're right, she was. She watched over me night and day, crying her little eyes out when I was very bad, and smiling and singing me little pretty songs as I grew better."

"And, I say, didn't you love her very much for that?" asked Michael, with an expectation of an enthusiastic reply. He was not disappointed.

"Why, I should rather think I did," replied Bullfric, "I did—I did, heart and soul. I have often thought, that once in a man's life, let his nature be the fiercest, stoniest, ruthless it may, there is one object he loves, whether it be a woman, a friend, or a dog. I never knew one yet that didn't, and I have known some of the hardest-hearted villains, by God's mercy! that ever lived. Katrine was what I loved, —when I say loved, I mean something more than that. I should liked to have seen one to have looked upon her with a frown, or an eye of ill-nature, uttered a cross word, or acted unkind or contemptuously to her —by the Holy Rood! I would have surprised them no trifle. I tried every means to make her mine, without being such a fool as to marry her, and once tried force, but she resisted me so effectually that I didn't succeed. Well, after that, she kept away, and wouldn't see me, and I felt very strange about it, and was very down. I could do nothing, and was wasted to a skeleton. I tried all manner of ways to gain sight of her, but in vain, and entertained pretty strong thoughts of putting my dagger in my heart."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Birn and Blase together.

"Don't laugh—I say, don't laugh!" exclaimed Bullfric, half-unsheathing his dagger, and looking with fierce eyes upon his comrades, "because it may cost you both blood," he added. "What I am now saying is intended for no jest."

The two soldiers in an instant looked grave again, and, after a moment's pause, he continued—

"Yes, I either thought of doing that or drowning myself. I was strolling out one evening with some decided thoughts about the latter, when I suddenly encountered her, her eyes caught mine, and we both stopped. I felt my heart rush up into my mouth, and stop there like a great lump for the purpose of choking me. With some little difficulty I mentioned her name. She was grown very thin too, and her face was as white as death. The change in her quite startled me, and I suppose mine did her, for she did not withdraw her hand from mine when I took it, but she looked up in my face for a moment, and then her head fell upon my breast, and she cried and sobbed ready to break her heart. I begged her pardon for all I had done, as well as I could get the words out, and she forgave me, for she was gentle and forgiving in her nature; and then, after walking about for a very long time, we parted and met again, and then we got married, and lived together pretty comfortable for a little time; but I didn't behave well to her—I know now I didn't—yes, I certainly very much ill-used her——"

"Did she give you any cause?" asked Michael, with astonishment strongly depicted upon his honest face.

"Cause! no, not any. She was always, I tell you, very gentle and uncomplaining. She never said anything reproachful to me—never uttered a bitter word for all my rough usage. Sometimes I would catch her crying, but she would, at once, when she saw me, dry up her tears and smile, because she knew I hated to see her cry. That had no effect on me, because I thought it deceit. She was too good for me, so I thought I would get rid of her——"

"Why—how?" asked Wat and Michael together.

"I was not quite decided. It was true that the house we lived in was hers, and all the money I had after our marriage was hers also; but I thought if she was out of the way, I could do more as I pleased; besides, I knew I was not treating her well; that her very silent bearing of my conduct was a constant reproach to me, and I hated that, so I determined she should go—I had not determined where—but go she should; and, even if no place offered itself soon to send her with any feasible excuse, it was only to be a little more rough in my treatment of her. I could see she was growing very delicate, and looked as if her health and strength were quite gone, and the continuance of my repulsive manner would soon finish her."

"Why, what a cold, unfeeling, damnable villain you must have been!" exclaimed Michael, with great disgust.

"You are merry," replied Bullfric, looking fixedly at him.

"I never was more serious in my life," he replied; "a more heartless, fiendish, ruffianly brute could not have existed. Why, man, what did you think you were?"

"No matter what I thought—do you mean really what you say?"

"Most certainly—I could not jest on such a subject."

"I should think not," observed Wat; "there's no scoundrel on earth could have surpassed the villany of your inhuman conduct."

"And you, too? Do you know what you are saying, and to whom you are talking?" said Bullfric.

"Both," returned Wat, "and am prepared to defend all I utter in any way you please. Any man who has acted as you have confessed to have done to one so gentle and good as her, has earned for himself the vilest name which can be attached to him."

"You are right; give me your hands, lads, I like your truth and candour. I was a damned villain to

act in the way I did; there is no vile name I did not richly deserve," uttered Bullfric, warmly, trying to grasp both their hands—a favour which, without the

ture to make you desire my friendship, perhaps; I may deserve it better anon—we shall see. Well, to finish my story. My behaviour was noticed by the

smallest ceremony, they each declined. He seemed disappointed for a moment, and then turned it off by saying, "Well, well, what I have said is not of a na-

family, for the poor patient fool never made a single complaint, and they took her away. I did not make any objection, because it was just what I wanted, and

away she went. I then carried on some rare games, until money, house, all went, and I became a beggar. Well, it was unfortunate, but I had once before been one, and I had only to begin again; so I tried for some situations, but I was too well known, and met everywhere with refusals. Matters grew serious when starvation stared me in the face; an empty stomach and ragged clothes were unpleasant companions, from whom I could not rid myself. I grew lean and withered, and then, growing desperate, applied for relief to my wife's relations, but they had impoverished themselves to make her comfortable when she wedded me, and I had squandered every crockard, and so they flatly refused me even a mouthful of bread, accompanied with a kind wish that every one else would follow their example towards me. I believe I behaved rather extravagantly upon the occasion, and I did hear that her brother kept his bed for months afterwards from the thrashing I gave him, for the dog was the first to draw me from my home and win a great deal of my money of me; however, whatever he had out of my purse I had out of his bones—there was nothing lost on either side. I then tried to find out where my wife was, and by exercising unremitting perseverance, I ascertained she had come here to Cadsant. I followed her. I hardly know how I worked my way along, but I arrived here in a very miserable state. As I strolled through the streets, depressed and worn out with fatigue and hunger, I was accosted by a fat citizen, who, having noticed my wretched condition, very charitably, on inquiring a few things of me, offered me a situation in his establishment. I was but too eager to accept it, and after having been fed and clothed, was regularly installed. I did not, on finding myself very comfortably situated, prosecute my search for my wife, but contented myself with my hard work and scanty pay. Among other duties I had to perform, one was to carry articles in which my master dealt to various places in the town. One day I was sent to this miser's house——"

"Now we're coming to it," burst forth Blase, who was in a dreadful state of impatience. For the last ten minutes they had not moved from one spot, and he, scarce paying attention to the story, was wishing himself anywhere but in heaven, for having broached the subject, feeling quite satisfied that, after all, he should be done out of the anticipated pillage. Bullfric did not pay any attention to his exclamation, or offer to put one step forward in advance, and Blase was fearful to urge him to proceed, in case he should refuse to go at all; therefore, calling a little more upon his patience, and curbing the restless anxiety which was gnawing and fretting him, he resigned himself to hear the finish of the tale.

"I had some difficulty to find his dwelling," continued Bullfric, "although the address was minutely described to me, but when I did I was surprised at the singular build of the house, which when you see you will acknowledge is the strangest you ever beheld. It was a long while before my repeated appeals at the door-post obtained admittance for me, but at last I entered and saw the old jeweller—such a miserable-looking rat I never witnessed. I delivered my goods, my message, and received a parcel in return. I did my duty, it appears, so well, that I was sent frequently. Twice I received some wine, which makes me ill to remember, and once he gave me a half-groat, which, when I told my master, petrified him with astonishment; it was the first time, he said, he had known him to give anything away but words, and he was scanty even of them; it only showed that by some extraordinary means I had got into his good graces, and I was now employed solely in transacting all the business between my master and him; for my master would not go near his dwelling, as he vowed if he did, he should become so thin at the sight of the starved appointments of the place that it would take him a twelvemonth to get round again. One day I went as usual to carry something to him, was admitted by the skeleton of a porter, and without waiting to be announced or asking if he was disengaged and would see me, I skipped past the tottering porter, ran up the stairs; but as the house possesses many corridors, winding labyrinth like, here and there leading to various apartments, and I had hitherto been guided to the room in which the miser had always received me, I mistook my way, wandered about, and at length opened the door of a room, and looking in, beheld my wife seated upon a chair, with a most lovely girl, about ten years of age, standing by her knee. I started and called her name, she screamed and repeated mine, the girl screamed and flung her arms round my wife's neck, and for a moment I knew not what to do; but as no one approached on hearing the noise of my reception, I approached and bade my wife be not alarmed, that she might easily see our meeting was accidental, and that I neither intended to pursue her or render her situation unpleasant; that I was sorry for all the unkindness I had shown her, but that she need not fear I should ever repeat it. It was not much that she said to me; but when I looked on her face, pale and elongated, and remembered how round and fresh-coloured it had been, and that it was I who had made the change, I felt my conscience smite me with no light hand, and as I felt I spoke. She was much affected by my contrition, the more especially when the little girl, whose arms were still twined round her neck, hearing the supplicating tenour of my words, pleaded in my favour. But with a soul like Katrine's, there required little prostration to obtain forgiveness; and before we parted, I could see there was the old feeling of love shining in her eyes: it brought back to me some feelings I am proud to remember I once possessed, and as I left her, I swore that she should never more be subjected to the ruggedness of my temper. I found by the direction the room I had missed, and transacting the business I had with the miser, left the house. It was not long ere I again paid a visit to him and her—for I easily managed to obtain an interview with her without his knowing aught about it; the second time I saw her, she told me that this miserly old screw is a distant relation, who had, when young, married; he had a son, his wife surviving but a few years after his birth; the son too, had married when scarce twenty, an orphan-girl, the daughter of a serf: the miser had discarded both; they had one child, the little girl whom I had seen. After eight years of wretchedness, the wife died and her husband destroyed himself, leaving the girl as a legacy to the miser; he took her, and had behaved very well to her when I was there. A female had been engaged to teach her various things, but not liking the sort of retired living, had given up her charge, and the jeweller sent to my wife's family for them to recommend some one to him; she having just quitted me, they thought the opportunity of sending her away too good to be lost; accordingly she was despatched there, and had the sole management of this grandchild when I accidentally met with her; a little explanation we had together, disclosed to each the position in which we both stood. When she became acquainted that I was living in Cadsant, in a comfortable situation, she offered to return and live with me, telling me that she would willingly work if the salary I received was insufficient to maintain

both. After the way in which I had treated her, coupled with her manner of making this offer, I in a moment fully discovered the fool—nay, rascal—I had been to her: poor Katrine! the blessed girl! Ah! at that instant I again felt that there is one object always in the world that we adore—she was mine; I could have knelt down and worshipped her then, as I do the Holy Virgin! I think she guessed by my looks what was passing in my mind, for she passed her arms round my neck, and looking up in my face with a sort of sad smile, bade me not think of what was past, but how happy we would be for the time to come. I could not help pressing my lips to hers, a thing I had not done for a long time, and then I told her she was too good for me, a great deal too good; that my temper was naturally cold and harsh, and that if she came back I was not certain that I should treat her as I ought; as she was comfortable there, and in no way the victim of my caprices, it was the best thing she could do to remain where she was, and not trust herself with a rough fellow like myself. She said she would bear all my unevenness of temper, for she knew I should be sometimes kind, and that would enable her to bear patiently my conduct when anything had ruffled my temper. She said many more kind things, which it's no use to remember now. I only know that the kinder she became the more resolved was I to fight against my wishes and remain separated from her, because I knew after a little while I should feel disposed to carry on my old games; and besides, I was already growing very tired of Cadsant. Well; I don't know what would have happened with her soft pleadings, if I had not by chance heard that Jacob Von Artaveld, the brewer of Ghent, was keeping in his pay armed men; I determined to go thither, and requested my master to grant my discharge and give me a recommendation to the brewer, which he did; I then left Cadsant for Ghent, was received in the service of Jacob Von Artaveld, had four Flemish groats a day for my wages, and little or nothing to do for it."

"Well, but what said your wife to your departure?" asked Michael.

"Oh, I don't know—I took no farewell of her; it was best not; she would have only cried and taken on terribly, and perhaps have persuaded me not to go or else to have taken her with me, neither of which would have at all suited me. I only heard once since of her."

"And what did you hear?" inquired Michael, on seeing him hesitate and drop his eyes to the ground.

"Why, that she was dead!" she replied in a thick voice, and then said rapidly, "Now you know how I found out the miser's house; and this is the entrance at which we have been standing these last twenty minutes."

"This!" echoed Blase; "what, this miserable little old door!—why, there can't be anybody with wealth living here."

"Can't there? you'll see," replied Bullfric, passing his hand at the same time down the fillet of the door-post in search of a secret spring by which to open the door.

"How was it you never made free with any of the gold and jewels belonging to this miser, when you had the chance?" asked Birn.

"Why because I never saw any when I was here—they were so carefully hidden; besides, I never knew what I carried to and fro—they were all parcels closely sealed—and the rooms I went in contained nought but a little furniture, only serviceable as firewood."

"Well, but where was the gold and jewels and massive plate?" asked Blase, anxiously.

"I never saw any: but when I was quitting my master for Ghent, he then told me that there was no man in Flanders possessed of such valuable gems, jewellery, and plate, as did old Grubhen l'Eschelle the miser, who lives here."

"Didn't you ask where he kept it?" asked Blase.

"Yes; but he said he couldn't tell: however, I don't think we shall want telling; if it's in the house, I'll find it."

"And I," cried Blase.

"You understand the conditions upon which I admit you—mind, one-fourth of the booty is mine; the miser's grand-daughter, who by this time must have grown a beautiful girl, is to be mine also—"

"We ought to draw lots for her," suggested Blase.

"Now, by the foul fiend, Blase, another dissenting word from you, and you shall have nothing," roared Bullfric angrily.

"Oh, have it all your own way!" ejaculated Blase, "only don't keep us here all day."

"I don't think he will be so fortunate," observed Wat Tyler in an under tone to Michael.

"Nor I," replied Michael.

"I won't keep you any longer, only I like to have things properly understood," said Bullfric; "if either of you meet with the girl first, and offer to lay a finger upon her so as to cheat me, he will have to fear his life from me."

"Both Michael and Wat laughed, nor attempted to disguise it; but Bullfric did not seem to notice it, and said—

"You must follow me cautiously, for if we get not into the house by stratagem, I know we shan't by force; therefore tread softly, and speak not a word until you are safe inside."

They all obeyed him; and having discovered the spring in the door-post, he pressed it, and the door flew open. They passed stealthily along a small court-yard, which terminated in four passages, looking by the turnings in them as if each was the entrance to a labyrinth. They were exactly similar in make, and equally dark. Blase, who was almost treading upon the heels of Bullfric, whispered to him—

"Which of these do we go down?"

"Now you see the use of a guide, Master Impatience," answered Bullfric; "each of these passages contain an alarum, and three of them lead you into the cellars beneath, regularly trapping you if you have no business here, besides setting a large bell a-ringing, letting every body in the house know of your arrival. The fourth leads to the upper apartments, and that also contains an alarum, which, however, may be avoided, by walking in a certain direction; so follow me close, and look you don't straggle about, for we are not properly in the house until after we are above the first flight of stairs. Hush! be silent! come along." Entering one of the passages with great caution, and as near as possible treading in his foot-steps, Blase and Birn went immediately behind him, and Wat, with Michael, brought up the rear. The passage was traversed, and at the end was a flight of stairs, which they mounted; they were old, much worm-eaten, and would creak most unmercifully as they ascended, in spite of the precaution they used; they had been unaccustomed to bear so much weight of late years, and groaned beneath their burden. At the top was a strong door, likewise fastened by a spring, the secret of which also Bullfric was master of, and in less than a minute he caused it to fly open; and then they passed a long corridor, which in its turn was terminated by a small ante-chamber, in which they entered, and there saw a very old man, seated upon a high backed chair; he was nearly bent double

with age, and was almost in a state of second childhood. It was not until they were in the centre of the room that he was aware of their presence, and then he uttered a feeble cry of alarm.

"It is only the porter," exclaimed Bullfric, "I will soon silence him;" and drawing his dagger, he advanced quickly to him, and, raising his arm, was about to stab him, when his arm was arrested by Wat, who cried—

"Hold your hand, man! you would not shed the blood of a helpless old creature like him?"

"Why not?" cried Bullfric, fiercely, seemingly enraged at the interruption.

"Why, because he can offer no resistance, nor give any alarm, and a year or so more taken from his life is not worth while adding the weight of a cold-blooded, useless murder on your soul. Bind him, if you like; but don't stain your weapon with the blood of a feeble old man like unto him," answered Wat, who, determined he should not slay him, thought it best to try first what an appeal would do, before he opposed his murderous intention with his sword.

"You young soldiers are always chicken-hearted," returned Bullfric, with a coarse laugh; "don't like to see blood, just like a woman. Well, it's of no consequence; let him drag on another month or two, he's not worth the trouble of slaying. Bind him, Blase, but don't hurt him."

Blase did as he was directed; and when he had completed his task, turned to Bullfric and said, "We are now, I suppose, safely in the house?"

"Yes, we are," was the reply.

"Well, then, let us three search the place at once; and, as this is the only outlet, let these two youngsters guard it, so as to prevent any one escaping."

"With all my heart," returned Bullfric. "Now, youngsters, you remain here, and don't let a soul escape. If a very beautiful young girl comes, take care of her, for she belongs to me, and you shall have your share of the booty, never fear."

Michael was just about, in very unceremonious terms, to acquaint them that he would do nothing of the kind, when Wat pressed his arm, and assented to the proposal. No sooner had they quitted the room, than he said quickly to Michael—

"We can do better than by keeping with them. I am mistaken if Bullfric does not lead his two comrades anywhere but where they will light upon the young girl he has spoken so repeatedly of, and respecting whom he has expressed such a brutal determination. While they are busy pillaging, we will leave them, and try to obtain her; but, by the Holy Mother's aid, the villain shall be disappointed, for ere he succeeds, he shall cut me to shreds, Michael. This old man, I doubt not, can direct us where we shall discover her; and once by our side, it would be hard if we could not protect her against these three rogues."

"I should think so," replied Michael; "big as the fellow Bullfric is, it would be strange if he could do what nobody yet has done—defeat you. I have not a doubt about the other two: that Blase's valour is nothing but smoke, I'm sure; and the other would not take much trouble to overcome."

"Let us unbind the old man at once, and put the question to him, for there is no time to spare," said Wat, suiting the action to the word, in which he was immediately assisted by Michael. The old man was easily unbound, and when at liberty Wat gave him a moment to recover the fright he had experienced, and then said to him—

"Be not alarmed; no hurt shall come to you while we are here, nor while we can help it to any of the inmates; but to effectually protect them, we must know how many are in the house, and where they are; therefore, do thou at once tell us where to find them, and rest satisfied then that no harm shall come to them."

"I do not know—I do not know," mumbled the old man, fumbling for a rosary, which, as soon as he found, he began telling as fast as he could.

"You must know. Do not deceive us, or I would not answer for the consequence. Speak! we are here to save, not to slay—is there more than one female in the house?"

"I don't know—I cannot tell," muttered the old man, trembling in every limb."

"Old man, you are on the verge of death; you are sending up prayers to Heaven at this moment, and yet you are uttering falsehoods at the same time to me. Tell me the truth; by your silence you are only endangering those you desire to preserve."

The old man shook his head with a miserable expression of countenance, but did not speak.

"Why, what an old fool he is!" cried Michael, impatiently; "see how we're losing time. We shall be too late to do any good, after all, if we stay here trying to get out of him what he is determined to keep to himself."

"Patience for a moment, Michael!" ejaculated Wat; and then said to the old man, "You are aware I saved your life just now, are you not?"

"Saved my life!" echoed the old porter.

"Oh! it's no use at all," uttered Michael, disgustedly. "Come along—we shall do no good with him."

"Did I not rescue you from beneath the knife of one about to slay you?" exclaimed Wat interrogatively, unheeding Michael's impatient remark.

"Oh yes—I know," returned the old man; "oh yes, Gerard Bullfric—I know him; he used to come here—I know."

"Well—he is about to plunder your master of his gold and his grandchild; if you will point out to me where they are, I will protect them from harm."

"Ho, ho, ho! very good—very good! No, no, young master, I am not to be deceived. No; I may be old, but you will not deceive me—you want the prize yourself. No, no; I do not mind losing the few years nature might give me, but I'll be close—very close. No, no; I may be old—I may be——"

"Hanged for an old fool!" cried Michael, bursting with vexation. "Come along, Wat; in an old house like this, the girl's shrieks may not reach our ears, and before we can lift a hand to save her, she may have endured the worst that can befall her. This old dotard will tell nothing, even to save his master's grandchild. Come along—let's lose no more time."

"I suppose we must, Michael," replied Wat. "Are there more females in the house besides the granddaughter?" he inquired; "that at least you may warn them to escape at once."

"I don't know—I don't know," he returned, shaking his old head. Michael became in a perfect paroxysm of rage.

"Don't listen to him any more; it's almost a pity Bullfric had not his own way; leave him here, and let's on."

"I am with you," answered Wat, laughing at Michael's anger, though vexed at the old man's stupidity, and then continued, with a grave countenance, "But be cautious, listen if you hear a shriek or groan, that we may that way bend our steps, and see what is to be done to prevent these bloodhounds accomplishing their horrid work." He then turned and left the room, closely followed by Michael; they

had not proceeded far when they heard the old man's voice cry—

"Hist, hist! come back!"

They stopped and hesitated what to do, but Michael in another instant said—

"Let us keep on, heed him not; he will only delay us farther, and we shall get nothing out of him, I know. Don't go back!"

"I will give him this chance," replied Wat; "he may have altered his mind, and it is everything to us to be able at once to proceed to the spot where they are concealed." Accordingly he retraced his steps, followed by Michael, who grumbled all the way; when they reached the room, they saw the old porter standing in an attitude of intense watchfulness, expecting their return. When they arrived, seizing Wat by the arm, he looked hard in his face, and then said, in hurried accents, which contrasted strangely with the previous feeble drawling tone he had assumed, "You are young, and do not look capable of acting so villanously as those who have left this room before you; you have proffered me kindly, may I trust you?"

"If there is truth under Heaven, you may. I came here only to prevent bloodshed and wrong—for no other purpose, as I hope to be saved."

"And yet you are equipped like those stern men, and did companion them?"

"We are of the same troop, but I companioned them only for the purpose I have expressed."

"I will trust you then."

"Now he talks a little sensibly."

"Peace, Michael;" said Wat, "quick with what thou hast to say, or we may not be in time to defend them."

"You need not fear that, they have already missed their road; I can hear them rumbling about below. This house is very curiously constructed, meinherr; you must live in it a long time ere you know all its ways; they will be some time before they find their way up again. You asked me what females are here: there is only one; the servants all quitted this morning when the news of the fight arrived: that one is my master's grandchild; she is with my master, and he is in the room in which all his property is kept; he has been all day hidden there, and in a great alarm, and if you can protect him he will reward you handsomely—that is, he can—and I have no doubt he will."

"Where is the room situated, that he and his grandchild are in?" asked Wat, quickly.

"You will not betray him, or break the word you have given me?" said the old man, doubtfully.

"I am not so base," haughtily replied Wat.

"Hark!" cried Michael, suddenly, "I can hear them returning: aye! and not slowly either."

"Quick! quick! old man," exclaimed Wat, hastily; "where is the room situate?"

"Ah! it is that Bullfric who has managed it; he knows a great deal about the house—too much, too much; yes, surely they are coming back."

"But which is the room?" almost roared Michael. "Do you want to see your master slain, and his grandchild dishonoured?"

"Oh God, no!" cried the old man, with sudden energy, "no, no, no; it—it, it is—that is—oh mercy! my memory fails me—here they come, you are too late—all is over!" and the old fellow sunk overpowered with sudden fright upon the chair.

"It is not too late," rapidly uttered Wat; "which way do you turn? tell me that."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's it," cried the old man, starting to his feet with a hysterical laugh, "turn to the right—every turning to the right, of whatever nature it may be—take it—take it until you are stopped by a door, and that's the door of the room they're in—away with you—fly, fly!" and again he sank down in his chair.

Wat darted from the room, followed closely by Michael, and, obeying the old man's instructions, took the first turning to the right, and ran hastily down it, just hearing a sudden shout from Bullfric, who cried—

"There's some damned treachery on the part of these youngsters; they have cheated us, but they shall smart for it. After them, boys! I can hear their footsteps."

"Shall we stop and meet them?" asked Michael, as the words fell on his ear.

"No, no, keep on, it will be quite time enough when we are at the maiden's side—keep on."

He set him a good example, for he almost flew along; once or twice he fancied that the old man had deceived him, for the turnings led in such strange directions that it did not seem possible they could lead to the chamber to which he was directed; however, he determined to try it, and kept on, the more particularly as he could hear that Bullfric and his comrades, Blase and Birn, were still on his track; at length, after proceeding up flight after flight of stairs, it was true they were short ones, each flight consisting of about six stairs, they ran along a corridor which had six turnings, but they took the one to the right, although it appeared to lead directly back—it was quite dark, and matted to the end. They had the satisfaction, before they had proceeded half down it, to hear that their pursuers had mistaken the turning and gone past it. As the old man had said, this turning, being the last, was terminated by a door, which upon trying they found fastened; they tried several times, but in vain—knocked gently, and in low soft voices begged the inmates to open the door, for they were friends, but no answer was returned; and then Wat drew his anelace, and finding out where the hinges were fastened on, he with the aid of Michael, withdrew the screws, and then pulling the door to him made free ingress into the apartment. It was a dark room, lighted only by a window in the shape of a loophole, through which the light penetrated only in one large burst or ray, in the full brilliancy of which were the two objects of whom they were in search. Upon his knees, with outstretched arms and clasped hands, was the miser, gabbling out prayers for mercy as fast as he could utter them; and standing, or rather cowering, by his side, was his grandchild, with both her arms round his neck, looking pale and alarmed at the entrance of our two friends. The room was one mass of articles of jewellery, plate, and warfare; massive iron-bound chests were in the room, upon which stood cups of gold of every shape, candelabrums, flasks, Indian cabinets, plates, and goblets; a large Gothic cabinet was loaded with golden dishes, jugs, and vessels of various shapes; here and there were large Indian vases, golden shields of the most tasteful and rich chasing and workmanship; golden salt-sellers, chargers, basons, ewers, basons with silver lavatories, plates with covers, silver spice-plates, superb hanapers, or vessels resembling soup-basons, having handles and a cover-lid richly ornamented; golden and silver spoons in profusion and of the richest fancy, velvets gorgeously embroidered with silver, and, in fact, everything was there betokening a wealthy goldsmith; the walls of this dim but wealthy room were hung with swords of various shapes and make; shields with several sorts of emblazoning upon them, battle-axes, lances, spears, falchions, estoes, anelace or

anelaces, coutelas, maces and cimetars, hauberks, bascinets, skull-caps, camails, and everything useful or valuable in the noble profession.

Wat took no notice, on entering, of aught in the apartment save the miser and his grandchild. Bullfric was not in the least exaggerating when in speaking of her he had described her as a beautiful girl; she was very fair, in accordance with her Flemish origin, and in that strange light, strongly contrasted by having her face to the very aged and exceedingly ugly one of her grandfather, she appeared very lovely. Wat was much struck by her beauty, and shuddered to think of the terrible danger she stood in, but he more than ever determined, come what might, he would save her or perish. Some such thought entered Michael's head, but with it the idea that Flora would applaud all he did in her behalf, and that was enough to make him fight to the death. They were scarcely in the room, when the old miser, Grubhen l'Eschelle cried in the most abject manner—

"Spare me! spare me! I am a poor old man, a very poor man; have mercy upon us, good soldiers; do not rob me of my little all; Holy Saint Mary soften your hearts—do not lay your hands upon the trifle which the labour of years had hardly gained me."

"Do not be afraid, you shall not be harmed," exclaimed Wat.

"Oh! but of what use to me is life if you take my property? I'd rather suffer death than lose my property; spare my little but hard earnings; I am old and very poor, and can't work for any more; you will not touch them, good Christians: do not, and the Lord will love you for your charity, forbearance, and mercifulness."

"I cannot promise to save your gold, but I can your life, and the safety of your granddaughter, but beyond that my services are limited," said Wat, rather disgusted at the miserable whining of the old man.

"Oh yes, yes, you can; save my gold, spare my gold, too, or take all; take my grandchild—take her. I know young soldiers have strong fancies for maidens—take the damsel freely, but spare my gold—spare my gold."

"Oh, grandfather—dear grandfather!" exclaimed the trembling maiden, "do not desert me—do not part with me; oh! I shall die with terror; have pity upon me. If they take all, I can work for you, but do not let them take me from you."

"Be not alarmed, maiden," said Wat, "you shall suffer no wrong while I have power to defend you."

"But you will not take my gold—you will leave that? Will you not take the damsel——?"

"Hold your tongue, you vile, worthless old dog," cried Michael, indignantly. "Thank Heaven your life is spared, you ungrateful old villain; ain't you ashamed of yourself? Sooner sacrifice your grandchild than lose your filthy gold! Faugh! you old miserable rogue, you would grace a tall gallows handsomely."

"Aha! voices this way; here they are, here they are!" cried a loud voice, half-way down the corridor, which both Wat and Michael immediately recognised as belonging to Bullfric. "This way, lads, follow me; now we'll catch my gentlemen;" in another moment, followed by Blase and Birn, he burst into the room. "Aha!" he roared, "all together, wealth and beauty; the young dogs had good scent. Now, you young cheating villains, tell me why you should not suffer death at my hand?"

"Faugh!" shouted Michael, in a towering rage, "death by your hand! ho, ho! why, such a dog as you would be afraid to attack a wolf's tail—death by your hand——"

"Hold, Michael," exclaimed Wat, and then addressing Bullfric, with the greatest coolness, though speaking in a tone of authority, said—

"I command your instant return to the troop, Bullfric, and that of thy companions."

"Thou?" bellowed Bullfric, in intense scorn. "Thou?"

"Ay! I am esquire to Sir Walter Manny, and thy superior officer; I therefore command you, upon the pain of suffering the penalty of your refusal, to return immediately."

"Thou his esquire?—but that matters not," cried Bullfric. "To hell with Sir Walter Manny and the troop too; am I to be done out of my wench and the booty too, by a boasting, foul-mouthed stripling? Not I; stand back, or I'll cut you down like a reed."

"Pshaw! fool!" returned Wat, "you boast of what is not in your power. Mark me, I stand here, and will defend this maiden with my life; your blood be upon your own head if you attempt to oppose me; I once more repeat my command to you to return; the fight is over. Blase said, on his way hither, that Sir Walter, after the battle was done, would not suffer you to touch a woman or pillage—therefore away with you. You also taught me the power of an officer over his men, and if you dare refuse my repeated command, you must take the consequences."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bullfric, furiously, almost foaming with rage; "dare to refuse! Blase and Birn, hear you that?—ho, ho! Do you mean to return like babies, without touching a merk?"

"No, no!" they both cried together.

"Then let's cut these two young hounds down, and then we'll draw lots for the girl."

"Agreed! agreed!" they both shouted, and prepared to attack Wat and Michael.

Wat returned to the maiden, and said gently to her, apparently not at all affected by the proposition of Bullfric—

"Retire with thy grandfather to the farther part of the apartment; these villains, never fear, shall not touch thee."

"We'll see that," roared Bullfric, as the affrighted girl drew her trembling grandfather to the end of the room.

"Come on, you two gallows-birds; you unhung rogues!" shouted Michael, quite delighted that the dear wish of his heart, that of having a bout with these troopers, was about to be gratified; "come on, ye villains, here's a true man for two of you, and your big blustering bully, Bullfric, has got more than his match, I know."

"Cut that fool's tongue out," shouted Bullfric, attacking Wat with tremendous vigour, "and I'll soon settle this saucy, self-styled esquire; you should have learned to use your sword before you came to the wars," he added, making a fierce cut at his youthful antagonist, who parried and returned it, crying—

"I did, as you perceive;" the blow he gave alighted upon Bullfric's bascinet with such immense force, that had it not been fashioned of the best steel, it would have been severed in twain—as it was, it made the blood start from his brow and trickle down his face; for a moment he seemed stunned, thus presenting an advantage which Wat did not fail to immediately take and make the most of. In another moment Bullfric measured his length upon the floor, and Wat was about to spring upon him and make him yield himself prisoner, when Birn, seeing his comrade's danger, quitting Michael, whom with Blase he was hard pressing, bestrode Bullfric's body, and

opposed his sword to Wat's. As his skill in the use of his weapon was of no mean character, Wat found it impracticable to rid himself of his new opponent in sufficient time to secure the advantage which the prostration of Bullfric had offered; consequently, the fallen man, thus protected, was soon upon his feet again and securing his sword, which had fallen from his grasp when Wat had hurled him to the ground, he uttered a fierce oath, and rushed at our hero with a determination, loudly expressed, of sending him to his account without benefit of clergy. It was not impossible either that he should be able to keep his word, for Wat found that in the room, which was not of very large dimensions, besides being crowded with various things, he had not free play for his sword, which was of great length; that indeed, with two opponents, he could do little else than parry their blows; for the time it would take him to recover his guard, would give an opening which one of them would be able to, and doubtless would, seize and place him in the same situation from which Bullfric had just been delivered. He therefore was compelled to be very wary, and though he saw in the impetuous attacks of Bullfric, and the vigorous assaults of Birn, chances which, had he been opposed to each singly, might have placed the victory in his hands, he could not avail himself of them, in the fear that in taking them he would be laying himself open to be similarly served by the other, who at the moment would be at liberty; he, however, stood firm, and had no little reason to congratulate himself upon the proof of his hauberk, which saved him from several fierce cuts. Bullfric and Birn might have fancied themselves belabouring an iron door, with the hope of bursting it open, and passing at once to their prey, in their engagement with Wat; he stood with his feet slightly apart, his bright eyes flashing from one to another, and his sword ever ready to meet the blow from each; he presented an impassable barrier, and baffled all their efforts, to their intense rage, to remove him. At length Bullfric roared out—

"Are you witless, boy? do you want to make this first battle your last, that you stand up like a fool against us, to keep us out of what is ours by right and custom of warfare?"

"Witless or not," he replied, "you touch not this maiden while I have strength to defend her."

"Fool! you rush on your death," exclaimed Bullfric.

"And will meet it, before you succeed in your villany," he responded.

Your blood on your own head, then, you obstinate idiot," he shouted, making Wat's sword ring with the hard and rapid blows he delivered; but though he cut and slashed until he panted for breath, he did not succeed in making Wat budge an inch. By this time, Michael, who, released from one opponent by Birn's proceeding to Bullfric's rescue, had made such good use of his time and dexterity that he succeeded in disarming Blase, but lost his own weapon in doing it; a wrestle ensued, of which Michael had the best, being the stronger and the more expert—and to remind Blase that he was not in the arms of a friend, when he had firm hold of him, he lifted him up and gave him such a tremendous back fall, that the room shook violently, and all the vessels, goblets, dishes, and shells clattered loudly with the shock. He did not suffer him to rise, but catching up his sword, which lay near, he knelt upon him, and said—

"Yield yourself my prisoner, or say your prayers at once."

"Blase is down," cried Bullfric; "go to his aid, Birn; cut that young whelp down, and send him headlong to the devil. I'll manage this fool alone."

Birn, as he was directed, made at Michael, who, hearing Bullfric's words, was aware of his approach, and sprang to his feet, one of which he planted firmly upon Blase's throat, and kept it there with such strength that the unfortunate Blase, with all his struggles, was unable to remove it, and stood a very fair chance of being strangled. When Birn delivered his first blow, Michael caught it upon his sword, and said, with a scornful laugh—

"Oh, you are coming to cut me down, and send me headlong to the devil, are you?"

"I am," replied Birn, with a fierce frown and clenched teeth; "and I will, too."

"Well, do it," replied Michael; "if you can."

"I have done harder things," retorted Birn, "with the greatest ease."

"You speak too fast," responded Michael; "you have not fairly tried me yet. I am not fond of boasting, but I think you'll find cutting me down one of the hardest things you ever tried to do."

"Don't run away with that fancy," uttered Birn, delivering a blow with all his force. "I have cut down many a bigger and finer fellow than you."

"You may be a liar," exclaimed Michael, quickly; "but if you have done so, you'll fail this time."

"We shall see," he cried.

"We shall," said Michael, making good use of his sword. Finding that Blase's struggles to free his throat from his foot had ceased, he concluded that he was senseless, and as he could employ it to more advantage than suffering it to remain there, he removed it; and instead of standing quietly to receive Birn's blows, he attacked him, and that so vigorously, that Birn was compelled, instead of trying to cut him down, to use every effort to prevent being served so himself. During this violent strife the maiden had cowered down upon her knees, and buried her face on her grandfather's breast. He was also upon his knees, whining and moaning, and crying out that he was a poor old man, a very poor old man, and begged them to spare his gold, his little all, the savings of many, many years; but his expressions were unheeded in the fierce conflict, which raged more furiously than ever. Time was flying fast. Bullfric knew that his absence from the troop, particularly under the present circumstances, would bring him severe punishment, perhaps death, unless he could invent some feasible excuse to account for it; and this, if Wat survived, he knew he could not do, for his tongue would not be silent, nor fail to let Sir Walter Manny know how matters really stood; if, therefore, he could slay him he knew he had sufficient power over his comrades to secure the maiden, the best part of the booty, and enforce their silence afterwards; the success of all which Wat stood in the light of, and that too at a time when every minute was an hour. With this conviction he felt his object must be to become the victor in as short a space of time as he possibly could, and fought as sharply and rapidly as he could; but Wat would not be cut down. Bullfric tried hard enough to accomplish it too, but he was very obstinate; for he neither gave ground a hair's-breadth, nor would he suffer himself to be slain, nor even give his opponent a chance, at which Bullfric grew not unlike, in his extravagance of words and gestures, a madman, and slashed away more furiously than ever. Blase, seriously affected by the immense pressure of Michael's foot, had struggled with all the strength he possessed to rid himself of the incumbrance; but as this was more than he could accomplish, and he discovered that as he added to his exertions strangulation

was taking place, he took it into his head that it would be much better to lay quiet and see what that would effect. His *ruse* succeeded; Michael removed his foot, and once more his breath had free ingress and egress. He waited a moment or so to assure himself of the fact, and to recover a little, which having done, he regained his feet, and seeing Michael with his back towards him, beating Birn into a corner, which there is every reason to suppose would have ended in Birn becoming the victim of a fate he had designed for his opponent, he sprung upon our friend Michael, twined his arms round his neck, and sought to fling him backwards upon the ground. The movement was so unexpected, that he nearly accomplished his intention; but Michael's natural strength befriended him, and by a powerful effort he succeeded in preserving his equilibrium. Observing in an instant the new position affairs had assumed, Birn directly changed his defence to attack, and dealt a blow which was intended to cleave our friend from collar to chine, which at first he concluded was successful, from a loud and fearful yell that filled the room the moment his sword had alighted; but he discovered his mistake immediately, by observing Michael still upon his feet, and receiving at the same time a cut upon his bascinet, wkich made his eyes flash fire and his ears ring as if a hundred bells had pealed into them. Before he could recover from that blow he received another, which made him stagger against a large chest, and a third which laid him prostrate among a host of things which stood upon it. The crash and din of the falling things nearly stunned him. This change had arisen through his having, instead of wounding Michael, as he had intended, severed Blase's arm, which was round Michael's neck, to the bone, and immediately the gash was received Blase uttered the yell, withdrew his arms, and Michael again attacked Birn; with what success has been described.

Things were in this state, when hurried steps, accompanied by loud voices, were heard along the corridor leading to the room. There was a momentary pause between the combatants, by tacit consent, when they heard them, and in another minute three or four armed men entered the room, accompanied by the old porter, who exhibited a briskness scarce to be expected from him, who but a short time since had appeared so decrepit.

"Here are the villains, good gentlemen; here they are," he cried, in a tremulous voice he tried hard to make loud and firm, but vainly. "Here are the monsters who were about to destroy my master and my blessed young lady. Slay them, good gentlemen—slay them. Spare them not; they would have done so to them; so have no mercy upon them whatever, and you shall be well rewarded; ay, that you shall, well and handsomely."

"I am a poor man," whined Grubben l'Eschelle, "a very poor man. Spare my little savings, take not from me the hard earnings of many, many long years of toil and poverty."

"Why, here's a goodly display!" cried one of the new comers, "lots of booty. A pretty wench and some stout comrades. A good spoil and a fair division—eh, lads? What, my bully Bullfric, you here? Aha! I might have known bully's nose would smell out the best garnished dwelling in a town——"

"What, Hardgrasp!" roared Bullfric, in tones of delight. "I am right glad thou'rt come, comrade."

"I'm not sorry, I confess," replied his comrade; "you have not began to divide, I see, so we come in for a share. All gold, I suppose—no sham. Ah!" and he smacked his lips; "pretty—very pretty—and worth having."

"Where is Sir Walter Manny?" asked Bullfric, eagerly.

"Oh, he's just taken Sir Guy of Flanders prisoner, and ordered us to quarters in a large mansion, near the haven. We were on the look-out for a little pillage when yon old man stopped and brought us to this queer old place, just to pop our hands upon it, which was doing a kind act, for there seems plenty of the precious metal here."

"Holy Mother of God! you will not break the faith you pledged me," cried the old porter, energetically.

"Peace, old fool!" exclaimed Hardgrasp, "you've done your part, now we'll do ours, which is to share the spoil."

"Oh, the Lord have mercy upon me!" uttered the old man, almost frantically. "What have I done—what have I done! You will not break your word, gentlemen. You swore that you'd defend my master and my dear young lady! Do not break your oath."

"Silence, you old dotard!" roared Hardgrasp. "Take yourself off, or you shall be stuffed through yon loophole, and find your way below that way."

"Oh, God have mercy upon me! I have slain them—I have slain them," cried the old man, madly fixing his hands in the few grey locks he had still left, and darting from the room, which act was greeted with a loud peal of laughter by the new comers. When it had subsided, Hardgrasp said to Bullfric—

"Well, bully, what were you quarrelling about when we came in?—the wench, eh?"

"Yes," he replied. "This hotheaded fool swears no one shall touch her but himself."

"You lie, you dog!" thundered out Wat. "I have sworn that you shall not touch her. Neither shall any one else, while I have life."

"Pshaw, boy!" cried Hardgrasp, contemptuously. We'll cast lots for her, and the luckiest will have her. That's soon decided."

"You are of Sir Walter Manny's troop," exclaimed Wat, rapidly. "I am made by him one of his esquires. As such I have the power to command all here belonging to the troop."

"You one of his esquires!" cried Hardgrasp. "When did he make you one? I don't believe it."

"I do not care one crockard whether you do or not. It is enough for me to know that I am, and by virtue of such position, I command all of you to instantly depart to quarters, leaving everything in this place, be it maiden or gold, untouched. Let me see who will dare disobey me?"

Every man of the new comers looked at each other with no little astonishment at this speech, but Hardgrasp burst into a derisive fit of laughter, and rejoined—

"I saw you fight, and boldly too, but you are as much an esquire as I am. It is no bad trick to try it on, that you may get girl and gold to yourself; but we are old soldiers, and not to be so easily cheated as you imagine. If you had been an esquire, you would have been proclaimed such to the men; so give up your trick, and let's draw for the girl at once."

"I warn ye to obey me—I swear to ye I am as I say!" exclaimed Wat; and I also swear, that he who lays a finger upon yon maiden, will do so at the peril of his life."

"Pish!" cried Hardgrasp; "you are mad. What can you do against eight——"

"I beg your pardon," said Michael, "I am his fast friend—I side with him, so there's two of us; and one of your rascally comrades is disabled, which only

makes your number six. You understand, six to two, instead of eight to one."

Hardgrasp looked at him in silence for a moment, but said nothing to him. He turned, however, to Wat, and observed—

"If you don't mean to make yourself agreeable to drawing lots, and an equal division, take yourself away at once. You only hinder us, and do yourself harm. Either agree to one or the other, else you shall be hewn down without mercy. There are six of us against you, so you had better not be obstinate, for you stand no chance."

"I do not move an inch until the maiden is safe," ejaculated Wat," were there as many hundreds as there are single men. Here I stand, and before you gain your object you shall hew me down. Take the gold, take it all——"

"No, no!" interposed Grubhen. "Anything but that, take——"

"Be silent!" exclaimed Wat, angrily. "Let the gold go; but the maiden shall remain uninjured while I have power to preserve her. Have ye forgotten that ye are men, that ye have, perhaps, sisters and wives——"

"Hold that cant!" cried Hardgrasp, "it doesn't suit our taste. I forego neither wench nor gold, or anything worth having; so stand out of my way, my self-dubbed squire."

As he concluded, he put his hand roughly upon Wat's shoulder and thrust him back; but the very next instant Michael dealt him a blow with his mailed fist, which felled him like lightning to the ground. All the adverse swords were attacking in an instant, and the clashing was tremendous. Hardgrasp rose to his feet again, and swore he would wash out the blow in Michael's blood, and dashed at him to perform his promise. He drew a small sword which he wore, and sought, in getting beneath Michael's guard, to stab him without his being able to evade the blow. Michael's hauberk was a good one to withstand the heavy blows which Hardgrasp delivered on his body—but it did: and as soon as he could disengage his hand from the hilt of his sword, by letting it fall so that he might regain it speedily, he seized Hardgrasp by the throat, and held him before him as a shield against the blows which were raining on all sides of him. Wat, in the meanwhile, with a short prayer for his soul, breathed the name of Violet to himself, and setting his teeth hard, he met the renewed attack of Bullfric, aided by Birn and two others, with a determination and bravery it was not in the power of numbers to daunt. He expected that he must fall; but he resolved to do so before the maiden should be deflowered; and if he did fall, to sell his life dearly; he never for a moment entertained an idea, even to save his life, of conceding, and proceeded with his task with no other thought but the hope of saving from a horrible fate one who was unknown to him; but who was, without his and Michael's aid, helpless and unprotected. His motives were noble, and nobly he supported and strove to bear them out. Although opposed by so many, he still stood his ground firmly, and the expected advantage was not obtained, though it appeared so feasible to his antagonist. Still it was evident that eventually he must be overpowered, and Bullfric grinned with immense satisfaction, as he occasionally acquainted Wat with such conviction; but our hero suffered no taunts or anticipations of evil to move him from the course he had decided on; and had he seen the blow coming which was to cause his death, and had the alternative of saving himself by yielding, he would not have flinched, but met it with the stern firmness with which he now withstood his four foes. What would have been the result of the continuance of the conflict may be imagined; but it was not destined to continue. A shrill scream and flying footsteps attracted suddenly the attention of all; the sounds were scarce heard, ere a female, with a distracted mien, rushed into the room, forced her way among the combatants, and gazing wildly round her, darted up unstayed to where the maiden Wat had been defending was crouching. She raised her from the ground, twined her arms round her, and said in a tone of excitement—

"My own dear Rubacelle, they shall not hurt thee! they shall tear me in pieces first! With my own life I'll protect thee, my sweet love! The wretches have not dared to touch thee! they dare not lay their ruthless, ungodly hands upon so fair a thing as thou!"

"Oh! I am so glad you have come," exclaimed Rubacelle, clinging to the speaker terrifiedly, "it is very dreadful to be here; pray take me away with you—"

"Aha!" shouted Birn, drowning her words with his boisterous voice; another wench—let who will have the first, the second shall be mine," and springing towards them, seized hold of the female to whom Rubacelle clung, and in an instant tore them asunder. He had barely time to perpetrate the deed and clasp in his arms the struggling female he had destined for his prey, ere she was rescued from his grasp by Wat and Bullfric, who together pounced upon him, and detached her from his embrace, thrust him forcibly back; he, however, again advanced to be hurled back again by Bullfric, with such force that he was only saved from being dashed to the ground, by being received into the arms of his newly-arrived companions.

"Stand off!" thundered out Bullfric, "stand off! it is my wife!—it is Katrine!"

"You lie!" roared Birn, having recovered his equilibrium, "you told us your wife was dead. You want to have everything to yourself—and may my soul be the devil's, if you shall! the woman shall be mine."

"You shall have nothing, hound," roared Bullfric, passionately, "nothing but kicks and buffets, not a grain of gold or property shall your fingers touch here that you may call your own. Back with you, wolf! I've changed my mind—away to quarters; I can command that—off with you; and if you stay here one minute longer, you shall try how hanging tastes."

"I'll not stir," cried Birn; "you've broken orders to suit your convenience—I'll do it to suit mine. I'm not more in the mud than you in the mire. You may command what you please; I'll not obey you more than I would you beardless whelp who calls himself squire. Do what you please; I've my sword as well as you."

"What!" cried Hardgrasp, who had been flung off by Michael when Katrine entered, "are you going to turn round, bully Bullfric—turn traitor to your old comrades?"

"This is my wife," replied Bullfric; "whom I haven't seen for a long while, and whom I was told was dead—which you perceive was a lie—and I don't mean to let one of you touch her, or look at her uncivilly while I can wag an arm to prevent it."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Hardgrasp, contemptuously; "I fear very much you are telling the lie, my bully Bullfric—such an one as did our would-be 'squire here, in order to keep the game all to yourself."

"Do you call me a liar?" roared Bullfric, in a fierce rage, dashing his fist in his face; "you shall not call me that name without being repaid; and now, traitor or not, I see fit to side with the 'squire. Come, there's five of you to three; come on, you dogs—come on, and win what you shall not touch without you do."

"My bully Bullfric, I'll treat you most handsomely for this," exclaimed Hardgrasp, as soon as he could collect himself from the effects of the blow, assuming a coolness he did not really possess, which struggling with the rage burning in his veins, made his features work in such a distorted manner as to render them perfectly hideous; "you say there is five to three, there shall soon be ten to three; Gasper, summon

our comrades who are below—quick, man, away with you, and bring them here at once; tell them there's plenty of gold and women too, they'll follow you fast enough I'll swear; away with you."

The man immediately quitted the room upon his errand, and the moment his footsteps ceased to be heard, Bullfric cried—

"My gallant youths, I am with you truly, so help me Heaven! Let us upon the dogs at once; clear the room of them, and then we can hold it against a hundred and preserve the women."

"May I trust you?" said Wat, who still eyed him doubtfully.

"You may," exclaimed Katrine; "I am his wife, and he will try, I know, at the hazard of his life, to save us. Pray help him; do not side with those wicked monsters, I entreat of you, as you hope those you love may in such dreadful straits find friends."

"Don't fear he'll turn against you, Katrine," cried Bullfric, quickly, "he and his friends have stood up against us all, with the finest spirit of chivalry and high gallantry, to preserve Rubacelle, making me now feel ashamed of the part I've taken; but, Sir 'Squire—if 'squire you are, and I now believe you to be, for one who has done so nobly would scorn to lie in such a paltry manner,—do not believe I'm naturally the damned villain I've acted like within this half-hour; I have better stuff about me, which you shall find if you know me long enough; your example has shown me what I might have been and what I am, but I'll yet redeem my real character from the filth I've surrounded it with."

"My bully Bullfric moralizing!" roared Hardgrasp, with a jeering grin; "I thought you were going to clear the chamber of us. Why don't you begin?"

"You will help me?" said Bullfric, earnestly, to Wat and Michael.

"Won't we," cried Michael, as Wat gave his consent; "I've a fancy for this rascal you call Hardgrasp; I'll tumble him out first."

"Keep on the defence," shouted Hardgrasp to Birn and Blase, who was too faint from loss of blood to be of much assistance, and his two followers; "strike not a blow until our comrades come, then crush them at once."

He had not time to say more, for Michael assaulted him with such fury that he drove him against the wall, and would have cut him down but for the interposition of a comrade who caught the blow, and returned it; Michael being compelled to parry it, enabled Hardgrasp somewhat to extricate himself, and turn his attention, with that of his comrade, to Wat and Bullfric, who had already put Birn in an awkward position, while Blase advanced and opposed Michael, but did it so feebly that his sword was speedily forced out of his hand, and Michael disdained to take the advantage of slaying one whose wound prevented him having an equal chance with himself, so he seized him firmly by the waist, and lifting him up as if he had been a child, he exclaimed, as he made for the door—

"You take up too much room here, we'll have you outside," and the instant he reached the threshold he exerted his strength, and flung him into the dark corridor as far as he could, adding—"You'll do there—you'll serve for a stumbling block for the others, if you do nothing else;" then turning, he said coolly, "There's one; I'll take you next, my fine fellow," he continued, addressing the comrade of Hardgrasp; "here's three to three now; it strikes me we shall have odds on our side soon—ho, ho! Wat, that was a beautiful cut," he cried, as Wat delivered a blow upon Hardgrasp's bascinet, similar to that with which he had treated Bullfric; "I think you'd better take the advice of bully Bullfric, as you call him, and retire," he added.

"My brave comrade," cried Bullfric, suddenly, and with great earnestness, to Michael, "you are in command of the door, keep it until the women can get by you—my wife will lead her charge to a place of safety."

"Aha!" shouted Hardgrasp to the comrade who was withstanding Michael's attack; "get between him and the door; let no soul pass out—quick, quick."

"He may be quick, quick, if he can," exclaimed Michael, sneeringly, "but then he wont get between the door and I. Advance fearlessly, my fair damsels, nothing shall touch you as you pass."

"Stop them, stop them!" roared Hardgrasp and Birn together, making exertions to get towards them, forgetting the advice which Hardgrasp himself had given, not to strike a blow until his comrades arrived; but Wat and Bullfric kept them so completely at bay they could not get from the corner into which they had been driven.

"Away with you, dear Katrine," cried Bullfric; "take Rubacelle with you. They cannot touch you; never fear. Away! not a moment is to be lost."

"Heaven bless you, dear Gerard!" cried Katrine, animatedly, "for your bravery and goodness. We shall meet again soon."

"We shall," cried Bullfric; "but lose not a moment now," he added, urgently, "fly, or all will be lost."

"Come, dear Rubacelle," she said, preparing to lead the maiden from the room.

"I am terrified to death," she cried, holding back.

"Fear nothing, maiden," ejaculated Wat, who was compelling Hardgrasp to exert the whole of his military knowledge to preserve himself from being severely wounded, "you shall not be in the slightest degree harmed as you pass. Fly at once, or it may be too late."

"But my dear grandfather, I cannot go without him."

"Oh, take the old gentleman by all means, fair maiden," exclaimed Michael; "only be quick, for if my ears do not deceive me, you have not a second to spare."

"Come, dear grandfather," cried Rubacelle, trying to raise him to his feet—he had never once quitted his kneeling position.

"No, no, child," he mumbled, moaningly, "I cannot go; I cannot leave my little savings. Oh, dear, oh, dear—I cannot lose them all!"

"Away with you," roared Bullfric, excitedly; "away with you, they shall be preserved all safely, don't be alarmed; away at once, if you would preserve your grandchild."

"I cannot leave my gold," ejaculated the old man, clasping his skinny hands, and whining like an old worn-out hound.

"Away at once!" cried Michael, with startling quickness, "there are footsteps approaching."

"Make for the door," roared Hardgrasp, trying to do so.

"Keep where you are!" shouted Wat, dealing him a tremendous blow; and, at the same time, Bullfric called out in a stentorian voice—

"Fly, Katrine—stay no longer—leave the old ass to his gold, but take the girl with you, and away!"

"Come, Rubacelle, let us fly," cried Katrine, pulling the maiden towards the door.

"But my grandfather—oh! dear grandfather, fly with us," exclaimed Rubacelle, clinging to the old man, and trying to force him along with them.

"My gold—my gold!" ejaculated the miser.

"Quick, quick!" cried Michael; "they are coming rapidly."

"Away!" thundered Bullfric; "away, or you are lost—away!"

"They will protect him," cried Katrine, suddenly disengaging Rubacelle's hand from her grandfather's garment. "Come!" and she made with all speed for the door.

"Do not let them pass," shouted Hardgrasp to his comrade; "cut the dog who opposes you down."

"He don't know how to do that yet," cried Michael, pressing the trooper so hard and impetuously, that he compelled him to retreat towards Hardgrasp and Birn, and a clear passage was left for Katrine and Rubacelle, where it was only partial before.

"Right gallantly managed!" cried Bullfric, who saw at a glance what transpired. "Your path is free, Katrine—away!"

"Hold! come back!" suddenly shouted Michael; "the rascals are coming down the corridor. You are too late—back to your place again, or you are lost."

"Merciful Heaven!" ejaculated Katrine, "it is so—we are undone."

"Back to your place again," cried Michael again, hurriedly. "Here they are!" he added, as the heavy tramp of footsteps sounded down the passage.

"All is up!" cried Bullfric, with a groan.

"Not while there is such a thing as perseverance under Heaven!" exclaimed Wat. "Do not despair; I would not yield or give up all hope if there were five hundred coming down the corridor against me instead of five; we may yet make them come to terms."

"Ho, ho!" grinned Hardgrasp, with a loud shout of derision. "Come to terms upon your knees, you rascals, and beg for mercy."

"Your loud talkers ever do least," cried Wat, preparing to astonish him.

"Down with you, dogs!" shouted Hardgrasp, with glee; "your time is come."

"Yours first!" cried Wat loudly, sending his sword, with a blow that never failed him, upon Hardgrasp's bascinet with every atom of strength he could muster. It clove it in twain, and sent him brained to the ground.

"Dog, you have slain him!" roared Hardgrasp's comrade engaged with Michael.

At that moment the six troopers entered the room, and Michael and Bullfric fell back with Wat, forming a line in front of Katrine and Rubacelle.

"Whose body was that we fell over in the passage?" interrogated one of the men as soon as they entered.

"My comrade's," answered Birn, quickly.

"Ay! and one of these knaves have cut Hardgrasp down," cried Michael's late opponent, stooping down to lift up the fallen man's head. He pulled off the bascinet, and said, shudderingly, "God! how the blood pours out. He's dead!"

"He shall be revenged, never fear," uttered the same trooper who had before spoken. "One of you," he added, "drag that body in here, and see if there's any life in it; and if Hardgrasp is dead, let him lay. You can do no good; only pay your share of the debt his death has incurred."

Not a word as yet was spoken by Wat or his companions; they looked on in silence at the proceedings of their foes. The body of Blase was brought in, and, as he was found to be alive, he was laid carefully upon the floor near the window; and then he who had commanded the body to be brought in said to the three,—

"Do you surrender quietly—give up the woman and your share of the booty—trusting to our mercy, or do you wish to be cut to pieces? You must do one or the other—resistance would be madness; we are eight to three. Answer at once, yes or no. I shan't allow you a moment to consider, but reply at once. Which say you—surrender or death?"

"You know me, Randolph," exclaimed Bullfric; "you know I'm always on the right side. I am so now, so don't you interfere."

"I know enough," replied Randolph, impatiently. "Is it to be surrender or death?"

"Death!" cried Wat, sternly, "if you can defeat us."

"Yes, *if* they can," replied Michael, with as much gaiety as if there was only some pleasant passage about to take place between them.

"Then have it!" cried Randolph, flourishing his sword. "Forward lads—cut them in pieces!"

"How do you do it?" exclaimed Michael, with a sudden blow of his sword, which made Randolph stagger back; but in a moment he returned it, and uttered with great vehemence, as he cut at Michael with all his force,—

"This way!" but it did not happen to be the right way, for it missed Michael, and shivered a gold candelabrum into several pieces, and in another moment he lay senseless by the side of the shattered candlestick. Wat was as successful with his first opponent, whose cheek he laid open with a tremendous gash, which made him retire speedily from the contest; he attacked another, and Bullfric fought with desperation. In the midst of the clamour created by the clashing of the weapons, a loud voice, heard plainly above the din, cried out,—

"Hold, knaves!—hold, rascals! what means all this?"

The eyes of the combatants were immediately turned to whence the voice proceeded, and saw, upon the threshold of the door, the esquire, John Chandos, standing, accompanied by the old porter, Leowulf, and Mark Grayling. No sooner did the sturdy smith catch sight of Wat's face, than, elbowing his way vigorously among the combatants, he reached Wat's side, and cried out,—

"Ho, ho! my bonny Wat! at blow and thrust again? What's in the wind now, eh? Ho, ho! I'll wager my hauberk—and that, except my sword, is the best steel I have about me—that you've taken the right side. I'm with you, Wat. Ho, ho! is there only you three pitted against all these rascals, eh?"

"Ah, Leowulf, you've guessed it," exclaimed Michael; "there was eight to three, and we had just reduced their number to six when you arrived. We'd have soon brought them down to our own quantity, and then we would have beaten them easily."

"Will no one tell me what is the cause that you fellows, 'stead of being unanimous, are at cut and thrust with each other?" inquired John Chandos, authoritatively, walking among the combatants up to Wat, followed by Mark Grayling.

"That youngster has slain two of our comrades, 'squire, besides wounding others," cried one of the troopers, pointing to Wat, "and we are about to serve him the same."

"Why, how's this, friend?" asked Chandos, recognising Wat. "I saw you act like a true man in the field; you have not already begun to put a shameful stain upon your blade, I trust?"

"If doing what I honestly believe to be every man's duty, that of protecting the defenceless against the strong, be putting a shameful stain upon my blade, then have I begun to do it, and, by God's grace, will continue to do so. I have cut yon heartless ruffian down, and if I could would again, were he to repeat his villanous conduct."

"What conduct?" asked John Chandos.

"Why," cried Bullfric, "here are two helpless

women that we are determined against all odds to preserve, while we can use a sword; now you may guess the reason he lies there."

"Did you slay him in defence of these damsels?" asked John Chandos, eagerly.

"I did," replied Wat. "They came here to pillage and do worse: they might have taken all the gold and property if they pleased for what I care, but I would not stand by while I had any strength or weapons, and see an innocent and defenceless girl vilely wronged, without doing my utmost in her behalf. I could better bear to be cut down than suffer such villany to transpire unchecked."

"By the bright star of chivalry, you have done nobly!" cried John Chandos, enthusiastically; "we are staunch friends henceforth," and he held forth his hand, which Wat grasped and shook heartily. "And you, too, my good friends," he added, turning to Michael and Bullfric, "if you have no reward for your gallant daring but the praises of your own conscience, you will not be losers, and if all my bright anticipations are not such visionary matter as fleeting baseless dreams, your deeds are written in the glowing page of good actions kept above. And now, you soulless brutes, who only cut and slay for mere hire, who know nought of what is meant by honour," he cried, scornfully addressing Birn and the troopers; "take up your carrion and depart to your quarters, with thanks that you are suffered to go unscotched."

"But he has slain our comrades!" shouted one of the troopers.

"True, and you're lucky that you have not met the same just fate," returned Chandos. "Away with you, dogs! and touch nothing but your senseless companions."

"Who are you that you should bandy your commands to us?" exclaimed Birn; "you have no power over us. I shan't budge an inch, nor give up my right to what is here. My friends here are staunch, and will not let their old friend and comrade Hardgrasp perish unrevenged, nor Randolph be cut down without a blow in his behalf. Upon them, lads, we are as many as them, and can beat them yet. No flinching, no quarter—the booty and the women, hurra!" As he finished, he flourished his sword, and prepared to commence again the attack, when John Chandos cried out loudly—

"Hold! mark ye men, the battle with the Flemings is over; the strict orders from Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Derby are that every man return to quarters, respecting the persons and property of the inhabitants, upon pain of death; disobey them if ye dare. Now do as ye list; 'twould be sport to me to drive a flock of hounds like ye before me, as I would a flight of geese."

"To the devil with orders," cried Birn, "come on, friends, we'll have the gold still."

"Take the gold, then, and whatever else you can, ye dogs—when you can; you avaricious rascals, come on, and meet the punishment of disobedience; now, come on, you wide-mouthed gabbling dogs, whom nothing but plunder and shameful acts will satisfy. Come on, and as you come, pray to the devil to help you, for no one else on earth can," roared John Chandos, springing upon Birn with his accustomed impetuosity, while Wat and the rest followed his example; it took John Chandos but a short time to lay Birn by the side of Hardgrasp; and Wat was not long in bringing his antagonist upon his knees; while John Chandos, joining with Michael, who was struggling with a huge fellow, quickly made him roar out for quarter; the rest, seeing how matters stood, threw down their arms, and begged for mercy in the most abject manner.

"What!" cried John Chandos, wiping the profuse perspiration from his brow, "ye have come to your senses at last. Take your lives, for the present, rascals; but as my name is John Chandos, you shall try how Sir Walter Manny treats disobedience of orders and unsoldier-like conduct. I can't tell how you crept into his troop; he is not in the habit of keeping such gibbet-worthies as thee among his followers."

"We only did as others do—its the custom to get what booty and anything else we can after the fight, else what do we fight for?" said one of the troopers, doggedly.

"What do ye fight for, knaves?—what do ye fight for?" echoed John Chandos, contemptuously. "Do ye not have your pay? Do you fight in order that ye may become execrable, dishonourable scoundrels? Is there no such thing as honour? bright, unsullied fame? a land you were born in which it should be your pride in no way to disgrace? What do ye fight for? grovelling hound! were ye in my troop and I heard thee say as much, I would have ye scourged from it amid the jeers and execrations of your comrades. Begone, let me see you no longer—take your fellows with you."

"Come along," muttered the fellow to a comrade, "bad luck here, better somewhere else."

"Stay, come back!" cried John Chandos, overhearing the remark; "throw down your arms ere you go—there's no need for them now in your way to quarters; you shall not have the power to have 'better luck' anywhere else."

"I am not going to give up my weapon," said one fellow."

"Nor I," said another.

"Throw them down instantly," angrily cried John Chandos, seizing one fellow by the shoulder, "throw them down, dog, if you would not have me cut them out of your paws."

"What if I meet any French or Flemings?" muttered the man, "I shan't be able to defend myself."

"Why, so much the better," cried Chandos; "let them cut you down—too good a fate for so unprincipled a knave as thee. But I waste no words upon thee; throw them down without another murmur, or meet the same reward as your comrades have who lie there."

There was an amazing deal of reluctance exhibited by the troopers in divesting themselves of their arms; but the alternative proposed was of so disagreeable a nature as to make the rendering up of their weapons the most prudent plan they could follow, and therefore they obeyed the command of John Chandos, and laid down their arms; he watching their acts closely, to see that they did not keep back even a dagger. When they had given up all, he said—

"Now shoulder your wounded and slain comrades, and troop them off."

"What are we to do with them?" asked the trooper.

"Just whatever you please," replied Chandos; "they are your personal friends, and if you feel any very great desire to preserve them, use such means as will accomplish your desires; but if you do not feel any more anxiety than I do for their recovery, you will fling them into the first hole you find handy. But whatever you do with them eventually, take them from here now."

"They'll want some assistance," said Michael, "to get them all away. Leowulf, you and I will lend a helping hand."

"With all my heart," said Leowulf.

"Stay, Michael; you have been at hard fighting,"

said Mark Grayling, "you must be fatigued. I'll help him instead of you."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mark," replied Michael, "and accept your kind offer, with many thanks."

The bodies were then raised, and the troopers, accompanied by Mark and Leowulf, departed with their burdens, the way being led by the old porter with great alacrity, muttering to himself as he toddled along—

"Very good young men—right gallant young men, —they did not break their trust—no, no—but they'll get nothing for their labour. Heigho! very gallant young men, but they'll have nothing for their trouble; not a stalding—not a stalding! This way, gentlemen, I'll show you out—I'll show you out. Not a stalding, and right gallant service too,—ah! ah!" Soliloquising thus he disappeared, followed by the troopers. When they were gone, John Chandos exclaimed——

"I was fortunate in passing near here; I was not a moment too soon to aid you, I fancy."

"No," replied Wat, "your arrival was most opportune; what led you to this out-of-the-way place?"

"I was on my way to quarters, to get a little refreshment after the fatigues of the morning, and see to a scratch or two which I have about me, when I was stopped by the old man who has just left, who with a demeanour of much distraction implored me to rescue his master and young mistress from dishonour and destruction. As such an appeal was not to be disregarded by a true man, I followed him, your two friends eagerly consenting to do likewise, and hither he led us. For the first moment when I arrived, I fancied that you were quarrelling only who should have possession, and felt pained that one who had acted so gallantly as you did this morning, should so soon forget what was due to his good name, and blot in one act all the good he had previously done; I can assure you I was not a little pleased to find my mistake. You are all attached to Sir Walter's body troop, I perceive by your accoutrements—I know your face, my man," he added, addressing Bullfric; "I have seen you in one or two hard-fought fields; I am glad to find you standing up boldly on the side of honour against brutal passions; your good conduct shall not go unrewarded; whatever advantage high praise of you to Sir Walter Manny may gain you, you shall not want. I will not fail to let him know that he has a true man in his troop, and who he is."

"You would not be so ready to praise me if you knew all," ejaculated Bullfric, hanging his head; "but it shall go hard if for the future I do not deserve your praise. One of these women is my wife, who was reported to be dead, but who I find here by accident to-day to be alive."

"Indeed," cried John Chandos, "that is fortunate —or not—as the case may be. Which of the two do you call wife?"

"This one," he replied, advancing to Katrine, who disengaged herself from Rubacelle and flung her arms fondly round his neck, hiding her face in his bosom; but Wat and Michael, who had heard the story, feeling interested in her, had looked eagerly at her face, as she turned from Rubacelle to Bullfric, and though they saw there were the traces and lines which sorrow carves, yet they could perceive there dwelled the gentle spirit which Bullfric had, unconsciously, so powerfully described. The next scrutiny was of Rubacelle, who stood shrinking and trembling by the side of her cowering grandfather, who still looked upon his guests with eyes of apprehension for the safety of his "little savings." The maiden was certainly not unconscious of the service which had been rendered her, but timid to a degree by nature, she had not courage to return by words the gratitude she felt; she saw the eyes of the three were upon her, and she blushed deeply, feeling that she ought to say something, but was too much afraid to utter a word to strangers, who, though they had been friends to her, yet from what they had done, necessarily appeared stern and terrible to one so very gentle and retiring as herself; she had also been so much alarmed by what had taken place, that she had with difficulty preserved herself from fainting with horror; and now that she was given to understand that she had been rescued from her frightful situation, she had not nerve enough remaining properly to understand the full benefit of her position, and thus still keeping to the side of her grandfather, she stood like a trembling fawn by the side of its dam. There was a short silence, which was broken by John Chandos, who, gazing upon Rubacelle with enraptured eyes, at length burst forth with the exclamation—

"By the peerless queen of beauty! what excelling loveliness!"

Her grandfather, as everyone else did, overhearing the remark, and being filled with but one idea, at once concluded the remark to apply to some costly piece of human workmanship in gold, and that whatever it was, —for his eye, dim with age, did not enable him to perceive to what object the sparkling eyes of John Chandos were directed—the speaker would appropriate it to his own private emolument, moaned out—

"I cannot part with it—I cannot part with it; it—it is not mine—was only left to my care. I am a poor old man, a very poor man; it is costly, and I cannot replace it; it is all gold—all gold."

"What is he talking about?" asked John Chandos, with surprise.

"He mistakes your admiring exclamation to be directed to some article of gold in the room, and not to his grandchild," replied Wat, with a slight laugh.

"He dotes; who would look upon gold when such a gem was present?" cried Chandos.

"You say well," eagerly exclaimed the old man; "you say very well; it is true, I forgot. Yes, yes, she is very pretty; a good child, too—a very good child too; Katrine will tell you so. She will make a good wife, for she is frugal, exceeding thrifty, and does not cost much to keep, for she eats like a sparrow. If you wed her, you will not touch my gold, will you? No, no, I see you won't. I can't give her any dowry, but when I die I will leave her a few things; but I am very poor now—very poor indeed."

"The fear of losing his gold has made his brain wander," exclaimed Wat, and then advanced to Rubacelle. He took her hand gently, and said in a low tone of voice, which was very sweet and musical, "Fair maiden, never tremble and shrink thus, your danger has passed, there is nothing more to harm you—we are your friends—have, I trust, proved ourselves such, —and while here we remain will still continue to be so; cheer thee and look up without fear, and believe this dwelling is as safe to thee as it was before it was invaded by those who were recently here."

Somewhat astonished by the softness of his voice, and the gentleness of his manner to her, Rubacelle looked up in his face, but dropped her eyes again instantly, and said very softly, so as hardly to be heard—

"I thank you very much: indeed I do most sincerely, for your kindness; and shall always feel—"

The remainder of the words subsided into a whisper, and becoming inaudible, left Wat to surmise all she purposed saying. Katrine came to her aid, and the timid girl threw herself into her arms, whispering earnestly to her, "Say something for me, dear Katrine,

tell him how deeply we feel his kindness—I have not heart to say a word."

"My dear child, fear nothing," exclaimed Katrine; "we are saved, and here stand our preservers; it is a foolish weakness to shrink from those who shrank not from death to save us. Look up, Rubacelle, and render yourself the thanks you so deeply owe to all here."

"My heart throbs so, I cannot articulate a word," she replied, still in a whisper, "I am very grateful—oh, Katrine, you know what I feel, what I would say; say it for me—I have no power to do so myself."

"Do not think this dear girl ungrateful," said Katrine to Wat and his companions, after in vain essaying to persuade her to speak, "if she does not with a great flow of words express her keen sense of the service you have done her, or believe that she estimates your noble conduct less highly than it deserves, because she is silent—"

"Say no more," interrupted Wat, "there is no need of thanks; if there were, her very silence and the manner of it, would be the richest way to render them. Let her but chase away her tears, and be as free and joyous as she was, or may have been before these rough events transpired, and that will be to us the best reward we can receive."

"Is he not noble?" uttered Katrine, turning to Bullfric, who made no reply, but advancing close to Wat, said, looking earnestly at him—

"When I told you my story, and had finished it, what was your opinion of me?"

Michael did not disguise his surprise at the question, and looked hard in Wat's face for an answer; he knew pretty well what he thought himself, but was a little curious to know Wat's opinion, knowing that if he gave a reply at all, he would not hesitate to tell the truth.

"Why do you ask me?" Wat enquired.

"Because, from what I have seen of you, I judge that you have been well taught—that you know what a man should be—and can tell me what I was, that I may take care for the future never to do the like, as well as try if what is to come will not repair what is past."

"You need no telling what you should be—no man does; and what is past, let be past. I hope you will become what I think you never were."

"You are shy of telling what you thought, because she whom I used so ill is here; you need not fear for that, she must too well have known what I was, to be surprised at any opinion you may give of my conduct."

"I gave my opinion of you when you told me your story," returned Wat.

"You said, no scoundrel could have acted more villanously than I did—did you not?"

"I did; it was my opinion then; it is so now."

"And mine," said Michael earnestly.

"I remember," said Bullfric, smiling, "you were the first to express your disgust, and that in round terms, too. But what I want to know is, what it was in my nature that led me to act as I did?"

"Selfishness," returned Wat; "selfishness of the worst kind; one that induced you to care nothing what was sacrificed, who suffered, or how great the suffering, so that your desires were gratified—self has shone through all you have done; every act——"

"Not all; he has done kind acts, even against his own inclinings, I well know," interposed Katrine.

"Your own kind nature, and enduring love for him led you to think so," replied Wat; "but he related to me and others the history of his meeting, his marriage, and all the circumstances connected with you; there was not a deed he mentioned but was instinct with selfishness; his unfeeling treatment, his separation, and after meeting with you here, leaving you without a word—even his defence now of you, his conduct up to the present moment, is one huge volume of self."

"You have told me truth: it was self-comfort, self enjoyment that made me do all," returned Bullfric, after a moment's reflection. "I always considered myself before others—it has led me into many an error; it does seem disgusting when I come to think of it; but I hope you will no longer entertain that opinion of me."

"I must judge by deeds," returned Wat; "to show you the rank ôdour of an ill name, I confess freely to you, I will not trust you yet in anything."

"You did just now," replied Bullfric, with surprise, "when I fought by your side."

"Very true," answered Wat, "I did so for two reasons; first, because your wife, Katrine, was here, and was a sort of tacit check upon you; your selfishness, I knew, would make you keep others from touching what you considered by every right and tie yours; and secondly, had you been treacherous, I had my good sword to counteract its effects, and repay it tenfold; that was why I trusted you then. But look you, Bullfric, I have yet had no opportunity of knowing whether you will turn out what you promise, and I have the strong remembrance upon me, that your gentle wife had no influence where self interfered; and that you came here with a diabolical project, which I will not, for your sake, make further mention of; but which, thanks to a strong arm and a good heart, was prevented, until the sudden appearance of Katrine averted your continuance in it, and made you lend your aid to me: remembering these things, I will not, therefore, trust you here alone, although your wife is here; but will either remain with you, or take you back to quarters with me, and send some one whom I can trust to guard the place until everything that can raise your cupidity be removed out of your way."

"You suspect still, then, that I shall seek to carry out my first intentions?" said Bullfric.

"No matter what I suspect; I'll take care you do not," Wat replied; "but I will make as certain as I can of this much, that my share of this last hour's work shall be remunerated, and that handsomely—"

"I am a poor man," ejaculated the miser, quickly.

"If all this precious metal, embellished with such gorgeous workmanship, and these steel accoutrements be your's," uttered Leowulf, who with Mark Grayling had just returned from fulfilling their unpleasant task, honouring Grubhen l'Eschelle with a sort of scrutiny indicative of a doubt whether he was not gazing upon some nondescript animal, "why then I should be very glad to know your idea of a rich man."

"Only borrowed—they're only borrowed; I am a miserably, wretched, poor—"

"Unhung, half-starved, miserly rat!" interrupted Michael, "one who is surrounded by everything that could or ought to make a man pass his days happily and blithely, and yet squeezes out enjoyment, if ever he does it at all, as a thief does honesty: a miserable rascal, who has no idea what he was sent here for, or why he is here at all, possessing just the ghost, the shadow of a shade of soul sufficient to link him to the human species, and barely that, and would rather barter the best feelings that God has planted in our hearts than lose a few pieces of dross which will be worse than nothing to him, when he has but good deeds to plead for him, when he shall upon the last day, come up for judgment. Poor wretch, I would not be possessed of the little lump of dirty, black, flinty stuff you have in your breast, which it's a mistake to call your heart, for thrice your gold."

"Well done, philosophy!" cried John Chandos, with a laugh.

"I thought you didn't intend to do what you have done for nothing," exclaimed Bullfric to Wat, but not without a small mixture of surprise in his manner; "it would be a hard matter to look on so many goodly things as these around us, have them in one's grasp, and yet not touch them."

"I am actuated by no such sordid motives," returned Wat; "my remuneration shall be that this maiden and this wealth shall be benefitted by our defence of them, inasmuch as they shall remain untouched; the satisfaction which the reflection that my efforts have been of service will be a powerful remuneration to me."

"Ah! Wat," cried Michael, in hearty tones. "And to me; and I know Flo—no matter."

"You will never make a rich soldier, if you continue to act thus," said John Chandos.

"I care not," replied Wat; "I shall not change my line of conduct."

"But you will make an honourable one," uttered Chandos warmly.

"And that's my ambition," exclaimed Wat, proudly.

"Ah! and that's the true feeling with which every man worthy of the name should take up arms," ejaculated John Chandos, enthusiastically. "To what end are great deeds of high courage, of prowess, of daring, and nobly chivalrous done, if they are to be tarnished immediately they're accomplished by acts of rapine and shameless villany, for which there are no words rank enough to describe? He who can wield his sword, his lance, or battle-axe, with surpassing dexterity and unflinching bravery in the field, or will fearlessly attempt feats, instinct with the most tremendous danger at any time, would be worse than the most abject coward were he to turn the strength and power with which the God of battles has endowed him, against the helpless maiden, or the defenceless inhabitant of the town he has assisted to conquer. He who can strike with a heavy hand when its force and weight is essentially requisite, should be ever ready to touch lightly where even the slightest impress is felt and shrunk from. Here stand I, John Chandos!" he added, throwing up his head proudly, and making his words *redolent* with the rich tones of enthusiasm he infused into them, "a simple esquire, it is true, but I have consecrated my life to the bright, high, and noble purposes of chivalry, through the fiercest hazards and the pleasantest passages; and will with life, so long as it shall animate my frame, defend from danger and treasons of any nature or fashion, all orphelines, maidens, or desolate ladies; and if I, in any manner, by deeds or show, depart from this, to me dear determination, as I hope to be one day one of the fair flowers of chivalry, and the true knight of her who will be to me the beautiful and glorious ladye of the world, may my name be plucked out from all others, and held up as one of the greatest villains and most infamous of cavaliers under Heaven! For this purpose I became a warrior—with this purpose, if not accomplished, at least unstained, will I yield up my breath to the great and good God who gave it me, not to shame or dishonour his image."

"Your words make my heart glow," cried Wat, when he had concluded; "you are actuated by the same motives which have impelled me to join Edward's army. I have left one in England, for whose dear sake I have chosen the same path thou hast taken; and there shall be no weeds springing, through my conduct, in my footsteps, while in it I continue, either to make me unworthy of bearing her favour or an unsullied sword."

"Well," cried Michael, "I suppose I've something of the same sort of feeling. I confess I do not much understand about the fine noble laws of chivalry, but I wouldn't do anything for which a man should blush, nor give an inch of ground to a dozen giants, if I knew it was right and proper to stand my ground."

"And that's the duty of all true men, whether knights or simple soldiers," uttered Leowulf, quietly.

"You seem to understand it thoroughly, my gallant friend," exclaimed John Chandos, "or Sir Walter Manny would not have been so high in thy praise."

"Sir Walter's generous nature makes him free of his laudings," replied Leowulf.

"Aha!" cried Michael, quickly, "what was that, Leowulf?—what did Sir Walter say?"

"I will tell you," said John Chandos, appearing to understand that Michael's question, was one which the native modesty of the smith would not permit him to answer: "our good friend here undertook to lead on a set of fellows who looked as though they were the refuse of some army which for a long period had suffered every privation, and suddenly had popped upon a depot for military accoutrements; every man seizing something, and donning it, whether it suited him or not."

"I know the men you mean," laughed Michael.

"Well, it seems they came in the train of the Earl of Tonbridge's son," continued John Chandos, "and he being ashamed of his followers, on account of their motley garb—which was not unnatural, truly, our friend undertook to head them, and show that their fighting qualities were not dependent upon their habiliments; in short, that they were Kentish men, and whether they had a becoming garment or not, they would do their duty as gallantly as the best equipped and appointed troop in the whole army; and well he proved it too. Sir Walter ordered him to join a party of men, which he left when he went to the rescue of the Earl of Derby, to cut a passage through the enemy, and divide them, without suffering them to unite, and each of the bands, his own and Leowulf's, to attack them separately. They not only accomplished their task, but drove their foes into the town; they were, also, when the gates were beaten down, among the first to enter it; and were the little troop which attacked the heart of the Flemings, and had the honour of assisting the Earl of Suffolk and Lord Reginald Cobham at such an important moment, that the Earl took the first opportunity the cessation of the fight permitted, to acquaint the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter with their gallant services; and Sir Walter Manny shook him by the hand, and said no leader this day had reason to be prouder of his deeds, than his friend—mark that—his friend the smith!"

"I am glad to hear this," exclaimed Wat.

"So am I," said Michael. "But how, in the Holy Virgin's name, did you get them to do all this, encumbered, as some of them were, with garments a world too large for them?"

"I took the advantage, while waiting Sir Walter's orders in the rear," returned Leowulf, "to make many of them change caps, hauberks, and weapons. Ho! ho! the fellows *did* do their duty well—they were of the true Kentish breed. Ho! ho! I'm thinking that many of the gaudy gallants of the army, who this morning laughed derisively at them, will feel proud to shake their honest hands. Ho! ho! though all the troops did well to-day, they have not all got a banner presented them for their labour—my little troop have—the Earl of Derby has given it. Ho! ho! the young Earl of Tonbridge wishes, I doubt not, he had not so readily given up the heading of them, for they are now no longer his.

"No longer his?" ejaculated Wat and Michael together.

"No," replied Leowulf, "there's not many of them; deducting those who have been slain, they make some three or four and forty, and as the Earl was pleased to say, they began so well under me, 'twas a pity they should not continue so; and he has given to the young Rupert a troop to replace them, while he has retained my men and myself in his pay. He has facetiously designated us as the smith and his hammers, and said, laughingly, that he could depend well upon his hammers to strike when the iron was hot!—ho! ho! I think, though he spoke jestingly, he spoke the truth, or I and Leowulf are not old acquaintances; but talking

about myself, I am forgetting all this while my duty. Sir Walter is enquiring anxiously for you, Wat, and bade me seek you out; saying, should I be so fortunate as to meet with you, to send you instantly to him; I was on my way to obey him when I came hither."

"I will obey him—I can trust to you, Michael, to remain here; and if Mark Grayling is under no other orders, he will stay with you, and see that no one lays a lawless hand upon either the maiden or the property."

"Aye, you must keep yourselves close too, for many of the men will be wandering about drunk and ripe for any devilries, soon; all order or subordination will be out of the question; and if you are not careful, though they may fail to overpower you with their weapons, they may subdue you by setting fire to the place," observed Leowulf.

"So you will place no faith in my virtuous resolves?" asked Bullfric of Wat.

"It is not your resolves I doubt," replied Wat, "it is your nature; the energy of mind you want to conquer its weakness, I fear; it would be a great oversight in me to trust in you what you have not the power yourself to controul. If I do not give you the chance of breaking through your virtuous resolves, you will, without much trouble, be able to maintain them; you must confess they are very suddenly formed—forced out of you by circumstances, for they were not made until you had been some time here. I will go so far, however, as to believe that they are made honestly, and if the temptation be not very great, they will be kept. It would be unfair, however," he added, laughing, "to give such new-born infants so hard a trial; and it appears to me, you ought to be thankful to me for removing you from so onerous a situation."

"So I should," he quickly replied, "if I could keep down the annoyance, almost rage, I feel at being doubted; albeit, I know I deserve it; but its the way, I know, with those who know themselves to be the greatest villains to ride restive when you impeach their honor. Well, leave who you like, and what you like, you shall find them here as you left them, so far as I am concerned; and shall see too, young squire, that it is never too late to mend by my future conduct."

"I begin to suspect," cried John Chandos to Bullfric, "that my praise of you, my stalwart soldier, was rather premature. From what I can gather, it seems you were of the same stamp as the rascals whom we drubbed out of here; however, as you intend to reform, I'll say no more about it, but hope that you'll keep what you so well intend. With reference to those who stay here, I have taken a sudden fancy to be one; therefore, if not against your particular wish, I will remain with your friends."

"So far from being against my wish, it will afford me the greatest pleasure," returned Wat, eagerly; "I would rather that my friend, Michael, accompanied me to Sir Walter Manny's: and if you remain here in his place, I shall depart with as great an assurance that everything will be done to ensure the safety of those here as if I were myself to stay. Leowulf will keep you and Mark Grayling company—will you not Leowulf?"

"Most readily," replied the smith.

"Very well then, so be it," said Bullfric; "we shall be comfortable and jolly—Katrine will furnish us with plenty to eat and drink."

"I am a very poor man," murmured Grubhen L'Eschelle; "my larder is but poorly furnished."

"Well, then, it can be easily replenished," replied Bullfric, coolly, "and we'll not be long in emptying it again!"

"But I am a poor man," mumbled out the miser; "perhaps you'll be good enough to pay for the extra provisions furnished?"

"Pay!" echoed Bullfric, with such an extraordinary display of surprise, that it might have been imagined, with a strong foundation, that he had never been accustomed to anything of the sort in his life. "Pay!" he repeated, in a faint tone, as if horror-stricken at the proposition; "why, you miserly skinflint! you bone-scraping, belly-pinching starveling!—are you not satisfied with having your grandchild and your little savings, as you call your immense hoard of wealth, secured to you, but you deny us,—who have hazarded life and limb in your behalf—the mere necessaries to satisfy the cravings of nature? Out upon you! for a miserly, ungrateful niggard!"

"I'm a poor man!" repeated Grubhen, using for the incalculable-th—to coin the word—time that favorite sentence. "I am not able to afford to supply enough for the extravagant appetites of four stout soldiers like you. I have something—a little—in the cupboard, I think, but barely enough—hardly enough for all—for all—so I thought you would not mind assisting my purse for whatever else we might need, and pay—"

"Pay!" cried Bullfric, as if the word would be the death of him; "we'll not pay a—"

"Heed him not, Gerard!" interposed Katrine, appeasingly. "Fear not, everything you require shall be placed before you; it shall be my care that it is, and amply, too."

"That's right, Katrine," he replied. "Pay, indeed! let there be plenty and soon, for I am starving. Pay, too! well, I like that—pay!"

"Take care that word does not choke you," cried Michael, with a laugh; "it is a hard word to swallow for those who are not in the habit of being guilty of such an indiscretion."

"Fair maiden," exclaimed Wat to Rubacelle, after joining in the laugh at Bullfric's expense, "I must bid you farewell; and in doing so, can but say that I feel too happy at our success in delivering you from your danger, and trust you may not again be placed in so terrifying and painful a situation."

"Farewell, my kind preserver!" murmured Rubacelle, gently pressing Wat's hand, which he had proffered her; "I am unable to express the strong sense I bear of your great services, but I am not ungrateful, nor will be ever unmindful of them; if prayers can place you on the highest pinnacle of happiness, my warmest shall be employed for that purpose. God bless you! and avert the hand of death from you until long after the dearest wishes of your soul are gratified! I thank you most sincerely. Could my heart speak, it would tell you what my tongue in vain tries to utter, and I can only make plain by feeble words. I shall always remember, with a full conviction of its value, that I owe more than life to you."

She wrung his hand fervently, and then, as if frightened and abashed at her own words, she dropt his hand and sunk back to Katrine, hiding her face in her shoulder. Wat then exchanged a few words with Katrine, John Chandos, and the smith; and, accompanied by Michael, was just quitting the room, when Rubacelle lifted up her head and said, in louder tones than she had yet used,—

"You will come again, will you not?"

"Oh, yes," replied Wat, quickly, "and shortly too." He bowed his head to her, which courtesy she acknowledged; and quitting the room, hearing, as he entered the corridor, John Chandos say,—

"By my halidame, sweet lady! I would that your fair lips would tender me such gentle thanks as those you bestowed on my gallant young friend who has just quitted us; or, at least, that I had deserved them, for then I know they would be mine."

"Had you, as he did, stood up in my defence—unknown, helpless, defenceless, and possessing nothing which could repay so great an obligation, as I was,—risking his life, which had in the frightful carnage of this morning been spared him—opposing numbers—men who might have daunted the stoutest heart—without yielding the smallest point in his determination, even though a terrible death was staring him in the face—all to save one of whom he nothing knew, I should thank you as I thanked him—think of you as I shall of him; but—"

The last words died on his ear; he had reached the end of the corridor, and as he descended the stairs, Michael said to him, with a laugh,—

"It is said eaves-droppers ever hear themselves maligned; for once the proverb is at fault—it is not your case."

"She is very beautiful," observed Wat, not heeding Michael's remark, and speaking as if thinking aloud.

"Yes," answered Michael, "so the 'squire John Chandos seemed to think, for he never took his large blue eyes off her face; and there was, I noticed, a softness in them as he did so, which was very different to the fiery brilliancy with which they shone while he was fighting. It strikes me it was possessing the same idea that you do which made him suddenly offer to stop here. There's one thing,—I don't think he is the sort of fellow to play false; but if he attempts it, there's Leowulf and Mark to bring him to his senses, and they wont be long in doing that."

"I would there was as little cause to doubt Bullfric as him," replied Wat; "if there is truth and honour in man, it is in John Chandos; I would stake my life upon his faithfulness to his trust; but the avaricious glance, the restless, covetous wandering of Bullfric's eyes over the vessels of gold and silver, strongly dispose me to believe it will go hard but he makes some of them his. I liked not the look either with which he several times reconnoitred the fair Rubacelle, for I narrowly watched him, and, but that I know she is well protected, I should feel uneasy at leaving him behind."

"But he has promised well," said Michael.

"Yes," returned Wat, "but I must see his promises performed ere I have any faith in them."

They now reached the chamber which was inhabited by the old porter, and as they entered it, they saw him seated in his chair, but he arose and approached them, holding out his two shrivelled hands with an air of welcome, uttering in a tremulous voice—

"Welcome to ye! right welcome to ye, good youths! Ye have kept your trust gallantly. I did think the world had grown so wicked, that the last day was nigh at hand; but you have made me think better of it; and for the future I will believe, if there are many wicked in it, there are at least some good ones to counterbalance the evil they do."

"For the future!" echoed Michael, in a mutter, firmly believing the old man to have but a short time longer to continue upon earth.

"You have lived here many years?" said Wat, interrogatively.

"Aye, sir, fourscore years. I was a stripling, like yourself, when I first came hither; my master was not so old. I served his father first, and then him, and feel as if I was a part of the family, or of the house—of the house. This is a curious old house; I could tell you many curious things of it too, but another time I may. I love it as a parent. It has sheltered me so long, that I could not leave it for the wealth of kingdoms, and hope to die beneath its roof, even in that chair, which for eighty long years has held me, without missing one day, for I was always hale and hearty, never ailing, save sometimes in temper, when my master has at times tried to make me believe God gave me with a strong man's frame a sparrow's appetite. I regard the old house and all in it—now all my own relatives are dead, and I have no kin in the wide world—as the last tie which holds me to life; and when I know that to you two youths I may owe its preservation, my heart expands to you, and makes me wish I had the means of my master to repay what you have done; but, alas! I cannot; I have the will, but not the means—he the means, but not the will. However, I have a small trifle, not very valuable in itself, but of great worth to me, for it was a gift from my master's daughter to me, the mother of Rubacelle, before she quitted her to wed the youth she sacrificed everything for. Oh! she was an angel of beauty and goodness! I doated on her as if she was my own child, but—but—no matter, it makes me weep childishly to talk of the poor heart-broken thing; she gave this trinket to me; I have cherished it as preciously and tenderly as if it were a flower that would die without it received the choicest care. I had nothing I had prized so much, not even life; but to you I give it, if you will accept the offering of one who hath no riches, or aught better to bestow, in consideration of the services done by you to my master and his grandchild, when you might, had you been evilly disposed, exercised your power so cruelly. Take it; keep it carefully; for though it be humble, I would have nothing that was once that gentle child's held lightly; and when, perhaps, you may press it to your lips in uttering some prayer, a kind thought may cross you of the old man who gave it to you."

The trinket which he proffered Wat was a small crucifix, beautifully carved in gold, and attached to a chain also of gold, and of very choice workmanship. Our hero received it, feeling rather affected by the old man's manner, and the good feeling which had induced him to offer it to him; and as he took it he said—

"I do not accept this in consideration of what, through the aid of others, I have had the satisfaction of accomplishing, but as a token to remind me of the events which have transpired here. And for the sake of the kind motive which induced you, my good old friend, to present it to me, I will keep it as carefully as you could yourself, having your inducement to be choice of it; and will never gaze upon it but I will recall thee to my memory, and repeat an ave for thy soul's welfare."

"I thank thee heartily," he replied; and then turning to Michael, added, "you, too, I have reason to thank for your stout services in a good cause, although I might not feel so well disposed towards thee, for thou wert not at first considerate of my age; but youth is ever impatient, and I can easily pardon it in thee, as it arose in an anxious desire to save my master and his granddaughter from the rude hands of the villains. I would that my master was not so near in his nature, that for all thou hast done he should send thee away empty-handed, when thou shouldst be so well rewarded; I have no money to offer thee, but I have a jewelled ring which I will gladly give thee——"

"I don't want anything, my good old man," said Michael, hastily; "keep it yourself, keep it."

"Nay," replied the old man, forcing the ring upon

him; "if you will not take it as a gift from an humble old man like myself, for the honour of the house do not refuse it. It shall not be said that we did not, even by a small token, acknowledge a good action done us."

"Oh, well," uttered Michael, "if it will save you any scruples of conscience, I don't mind." He placed it upon his finger, and added, "But I don't want anything of this sort as a return for doing what my heart tells me is only my duty."

"You are both honourable, good youths," uttered the old man, and was about to speak further, when Wat stopped him by bidding him farewell, telling him they would meet again; and soon again they were in the streets of Cadsant.

As they took their way to the quarters of Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Derby, the traces of the deadly conflict were everywhere apparent. They hastened along, for the sights which were continually being presented to them made them, unaccustomed to such scenes, heart-sick, and they soon reached the mansion which contained the Knight and the Earl. It was a very capacious residence, and was surrounded by large bodies of soldiery, while at the door stood many of the officers and commanders of the various troops, waiting for orders. Wat and Michael had some difficulty in getting to the door, and when there, were prevented entering by a soldier who kept the entry, until Wat mentioned his name, and then he was permitted to pass, but not Michael: he therefore descended the steps, agreeing to wait until Wat returned from his interview with Sir Walter. While pacing to and fro, he noticed a group of young military men standing together, laughing and talking; among them he recognised the cause of his quitting England, young Rupert, who was the loudest talker and laugher of the group. It struck Michael once, after a peal of boisterous mirth, that he was the subject of their merriment, for the eyes of the party were several times turned upon him. Exceedingly sensitive of ridicule, he felt stung to the quick, as the thought struck him; the blood rushed to his forehead, and instinctively he grasped his sword, determining on the instant to get near enough to catch the tenour of the conversation, and if it proved to be as he suspected, his keen sense of what was due to his honour would prompt him how to act. He drew nearer, as if casually, and plainly heard the words "wench" and "jealous dog," accompanied by something else, which he could not catch, but which renewed the laughter. Michael felt almost assured he had conjectured rightly; his chest burned—the hot blood, as it coursed rapidly through his veins, almost scorched him. He drew nearer still; Rupert was too much engaged in his tale to notice his change of place; and then he distinctly heard Flora's name mentioned, accompanied by a somewhat slighting term. He waited to hear no more, but walking into the midst of the group, rather to their astonishment, he looked Rupert fiercely in the face, and said—

"You mentioned a maiden's name but this moment in a loose manner. Were you speaking of one you met at Brenchley, beneath a roof where, as a friend of Sir Walter Manny's, you were welcomed and treated with hospitality?"

Rupert looked amazingly disconcerted. This was an event he had not calculated upon; but, with a strong effort, he partly recovered himself, and drawing himself with an air of *hauteur*, intended to awe Michael, but which did not in the least affect him, he replied—

"What mean you?"

"That you uttered the name of Flora, a moment since, slightingly," answered Michael, sternly; "and I insist upon knowing whether you were alluding to the maiden in whose company we were when last I saw you in England?"

"What if I answer No, or Yes?" demanded Rupert, rather haughtily.

"I will suppose nothing. I will have a decided answer. I have little doubt you will not utter a falsehood. The nature of your communication will tell those around whether I was in any way connected with it; and if I was, then I shall know you were speaking of Flora Botolph; and, for your own honour, you dare not utter so palpable a lie as to deny it."

"And if I were, what then?" inquired Rupert, chafing at Michael's words.

"Were you? Yes or no—nothing less will suit me," persisted Michael.

"I was—now for your mighty matter," said Rupert, sneeringly.

"I command you, then, to retract every slighting word you uttered," cried Michael, fiercely; "not only to retract it, but to acknowledge, in the presence of all who heard your base, unmanly disparagement, that you spoke falsely."

"Command!—falsely!" echoed Rupert, indignantly. "Churl, do you know to whom you are speaking?"

"Yes," retorted Michael, laying a sarcastic emphasis upon his words; "Yes—to one who repays hospitality and the kind words of a simple maiden with a foul tongue, uttering slanders where he flatters himself there are none to take them up and hurl them back to his teeth with scorn and defiance—to him who had not the courage to lead on the ragged train, who, without him, achieved honors they could never have hoped, in years of long service, under him to have attained."

"Peasant hound," roared Rupert, "I'll smite thee to the earth!" He made a rush at him to fulfil his intention, but several of the group interposed and withheld him. Michael stood unmoved, save by the anger which possessed him at Rupert's manner of mentioning Flora's name; and when the efforts made to restrain Rupert had succeeded, and he was induced to stand comparatively still, he spoke again,—

"Your threat is idle," he said, "and nought to the purpose. Recall your words, or defend them with your sword; and I warn ye, that defence shall be made at the peril of your life, for either thou or I shall perish if those words remain unretracted."

"Fight with thee?" exclaimed Rupert, scornfully; "I measure swords only with my equals."

"A base evasion," answered Michael, contemptuously, "which, were I you—and I thank God I am not—I should be ashamed to use; but it shall avail you nothing—I am your equal!"

"Thou?" echoed Rupert.

"Ay! in everything that constitutes a man of honor. I am a free subject: my father and his father were free men; I have never done an act to bring a blush into my cheeks, or of those who are connected with me, nor would I to purchase a kingdom. I can wield my sword as a man should do, and have never used it in a base deed; and I would take scorn and shame unto myself to do the unknightly trick thou hast done—of defaming an innocent damsel; aye, even of one who had, in being kind to me, proved frail. But thou hast no grounds for thy cursed slanders, and shall unsay them or defend them, or be branded by me as a coward and liar."

"Slave!" cried Rupert, through his grinding teeth, foaming with passion.

"Not thine, nor any man's," returned Michael, coolly; "the only distinction between us is, that thou'rt

an earl's son, whose origin is no better than mine own; and art one who has lied, and hast not the common principle of justice to confess even that he spoke unadvisedly, or the courage to defend his vile aspersion."

"Thou knowest, scoundrel, I cannot descend to fight thee—a peasant knave," roared Rupert; "and dost presume upon that knowledge to thus villanously insult me about a we—"

"Hold!" shouted Michael, fiercely; "dare but to breathe such a term in connection with her, and I'll dash my fist in thy face, wer't thou Edward himself. By Heaven! thou shalt unsay thy words, or receiving at my hands a blow, bear the stigma of coward and liar ever after."

"Stay!" interposed one of the group, who had but just joined them when Michael first addressed Rupert. "Stay, the matter is too serious for a mere brawl, to which it is now tending. Give me to know, my bold friend, thy right to take up the cause of the damsel you assert to be aspersed; and if thou dost establish it, the young knight shall fight thee or quit the army."

"Who art thou who asks the question?" demanded Michael, in his turn, rather haughtily; because knowing that those around had joined in the laugh which Rupert had raised at his expense, he regarded them all in the light of enemies.

"Lewis Beauchamp!" returned the stranger.

"The Lord Lewis Beauchamp!" inquired Michael, eagerly.

"The same," was the reply.

"The Holy Virgin be praised!" uttered Michael, fervently; "I know that I shall receive full justice from thee—thou who art thyself all honor, and noted for esteeming honor not to depend on rank or condition; I place myself joyfully in thy hands, and will cheerfully abide by thy decision. My right to defend the maiden's name from spot or stain is this:—I have known her from childhood—have loved her as long. *He* came to the dwelling of a mutual friend with Sir Walter Manny, was received and treated kindly; was in the company of the maiden he has aspersed but an hour or so, and has shamefully, because she was by nature of high spirits, lively and merry—but nothing more, I'll gage my life—spoken of her in the company of those around as though she had been his leman, and I the victim of his success and her deceit. Were I to add that a vast amount of misery has already been occasioned through him—though he is less to blame in that—it might make my position and right to demand satisfaction stronger; but I waive it, and stick to this—he shall either gainsay his words or fight me, or take the consequences of a refusal of either."

"You have done well, and as a man should do," said Lord Lewis Beauchamp, when he had concluded; "and you shall have the satisfaction you require, if I have any power here." Then, turning to Rupert, he addressed him coldly, while all the young knights looked on eagerly, and by the gravity of their earnest countenances, it was easy to see that an important point was involved in the noble's words. "You are new to the army, and to the laws of chivalry," he commenced, "and ere you entered upon your new path, should have been well grounded in the base upon which a knight founds his every action; it is honour, unsullied by flaw or blemish; honour, which is not to be maintained at the expense of a maiden's fair fame, be she ever so humble; or by imperiously refusing satisfaction for the use of disparaging comments to one, who, if he wears not an emblazoned surcoat, can make as clean a shrift, perhaps cleaner than thou. The man you have wronged is not to be denied redress, because you are an earl's son and he but a simple peasant; his wrongs place him on equal terms with you, were he a serf and thou an emperor. A title is but an *honourable* distinction, whose advantages you forfeit when you disgrace it by a foul deed. You must understand, and be taught if you do not, that every true knight is devoted to the services of all maidens, of lofty or lowly stations; his strong arm and his best words are to defend, and not to disparage or injure them. In speaking lightly of a maiden, be she who or what she may, you have done an unknightly act; there is not one of these knights around you—many not older in years than thou art, would, were you to appeal to them, countenance you in what you've done, albeit they indulged in mirth at your idle words; and nothing remains for you but either to acknowledge with contriteness your fault, or defend your assertion with your life; although your adoption of the latter will scarcely redeem your degradation of the maiden; for even if she is a wanton—"

"Which she is not," interrupted Michael. "I defy any one in the world to say so and speak the truth, and will maintain what I say, against an army of defamers to the death."

"I believe thee," said Lord Lewis Beauchamp; "thy honest earnestness is a sufficient guarantee that thou dost speak the truth. But had she been free in her favours to him, it is but an indulgence in the basest littlemindedness, and unworthy any man, much less a true knight, to boast of his success over one, whose weakness it should have been his pride to make her safeguard; or, at least, if he had taken advantage of it, to have kept it in his own breast a profound secret. My young Lord of Tonbridge, you now, I trust, understand fully the nature of the position in which you stand, and the line of action it becomes you to adopt."

The Lord Beauchamp ceased speaking, and Rupert, who looked terribly abashed by the grave severity of his speech, glanced uneasily round at the faces which were regarding his with close attention; his eye lighted upon Michael's countenance, which bore, he fancied, an expression of insolent triumph, but which, in truth, was but the joy he felt, at the opportunity he believed was now in his power, of chastising the cause of grief to him, and the slanderer of Flora's name. The natural haughty impetuosity of Rupert was aroused by this supposition, and he made a struggle to appear as if unaffected by the strong reproof he had received; he cleared his voice, and said—

"My Lord Lewis Beauchamp, I bow with deference to your better knowledge of a knight's duty. I am mightily sorry that I should have in any degree departed from the true course which is followed by a preux chevalier; and if I have erred, it has been through ignorance, not intention. I shall feel happy in any way to redeem my error, provided it may be done without compromising my honour, which I fear, were I to act as you have counselled, would be affected."

"Dost thou think I have been so long among the noblest men of the time, have guarded mine own honour with such scrupulous care, that I should be incompetent to advise thee the course thou could'st only properly pursue, to regain the place among knights thou hast lost?"

"Lost!" echoed Rupert, looking rather startled.

"Aye!" returned Lord Lewis, speaking a little angrily at Rupert's doubt at the propriety of his advice; "the laws of chivalry are conducted upon a different plan to what they have been—or, at least, more strictly followed; and though you be an earl's son, there's not an knight around thee will acknowledge thee, until thou has removed this stain from thee."

"Not acknowledge me!" retorted Rupert, with a derisive laugh. "Do you hear this, friends?" he added, looking round, "Which of ye will shrink from my friendship, because my tongue has perhaps wagged a little too fast? Here is my hand: let me know him, who for so slight an error, will withhold his from it?"

To his undisguised astonishment not a hand was put forth in answer to his query, and a dead silence followed. His face became the colour of scarlet; he saw, in an instant, that the Lord Lewis Beauchamp had not exaggerated, and felt as if he stood there a criminal discovered to have committed some great crime; he paused for a moment, but as the silence continued, not giving him the slightest chance to doubt its meaning, he felt his haughty firmness forsaken, and in a voice which denoted the change, exclaimed—

"What! all against me? Is there not one to step forth to side with me against this peasant churl? You, Beauclerk, will not fall from me now I need a friend, will you?"

"You have put it out of my power to side with you, Rupert," returned Lord William Beauclerk. "When, as Lord Lewis Beauchamp has observed, you have removed this stain from thy honour, none will more proudly grasp thy hand than I."

"It is well," returned Rupert, bitterly, "and yet you laughed loudest at my foolish sally; no matter—it is decided among ye that I have acted in an unknightly fashion."

"How's this? acted in an unknightly fashion? Great Heaven! Rupert, what mean these words?" exclaimed his cousin Ulfred, suddenly joining the group, and catching the last words.

"Oh, Ulfred, I am so glad you have come," eagerly cried Rupert. "You can now tell me how to act—I will be guided in all things by you."

"I, too, am glad he has come," exclaimed Michael, "you cannot now say you are unfriended, or have not a competent judge of the case. I doubt now less than ever the issue."

Lord Beauchamp, in reply to Ulfred's reiterated request, related the cause of the quarrel, and when he had concluded, Ulfred turned to Rupert, and said—

"It is your failing, Rupert, to suffer your tongue to outstrip your prudence; in this case it has your truth. I was a witness to all that transpired between you and the maiden, from whom you received nothing more than kind speeches, dictated by the lively impulses of a sprightly but innocent nature; nothing but what you should have remembered with pleasure, save the regret which was due for what ensued, and spoken of, if mentioned at all, with at least respect for the kindness you received."

"God bless you, sir," cried Michael, enthusiastically, "for your justice! you was there and know all, and can vouch that Flora does not deserve to be spoken of in the shameful way in which he has mentioned her name."

"Ulfred," said Rupert, shame struggling with pride strongly visible in his countenance, "I have done wrong, I feel very powerfully, or all would not be so unanimously against me. Well, though the humiliation be very great, and you, who know my character well, can be at no loss to conjecture how severe it is, I will do the best I can to repair what I have committed, by first acknowledging that what I have spoken of the maiden is untrue, grossly and unconditionally false—that, although lively, there was nothing in her behaviour to warrant me deeming her other than innocent and pure. I retract my former words, and will hold her name free and spotless with my best blood, and there's my gage." He drew his glove from his hand, and threw it down. "So far as the maiden is concerned, I believe it will be sufficient," he added, addressing Lord Beauchamp, "if in concluding I express my great sorrow and regret that I should have been led to act so indiscreetly and unknightly."

"It is sufficient," replied Lord Lewis; "albeit, there is a penance more severe for such errors; but you are very young, and considering your nature, it is enough."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Rupert, with a sigh of relief; "and if there is any apology due to this peasant—"

"You forget he is a soldier, of whom the Earl of Derby has had occasion to speak praisingly, where your name has remained unmentioned; your term is unconsidered, use a better one—though it be no disgrace to be an honest peasant, yet as you employ it as a term of—"

"Nay, let him call me a peasant," interrupted Michael, "it affects not me—it is better to be an honest peasant than a dishonorable noble; but if he wishes to address me, let him use my own name—I am called Michael Rycheart."

"Am I at liberty to proceed?" asked Rupert, sullenly, when he concluded; an assent was given, and he proceeded. "If to clear myself farther, any apology for wounded feelings is due to this Michael Rycheart, I give it to the fullest extent the offence requires; but as I am to understand that my station is not compromised by crossing swords with him, why I will have satisfaction from him for his insolence."

"Satisfaction!" cried Ulfred, "are you mad, Rupert? It is for you to render satisfaction."

"And I have," he replied, chafing with rage, "as much as can be required, and as much as I intend to give. I will have as much, too, as I have given."

"You shall," replied Michael, "and, if we are allowed, this moment, too."

"The sooner the better—it cannot be too soon for me; I shall not wait to be allowed. If you are not the liar and coward you called me, you will to your sword and commence at once."

"'Sdeath, Rupert! do you seek to bring disgrace upon yourself and your father's house?" exclaimed Ulfred, earnestly. "Put up your sword till a more fitting time."

"Nay," said Lord Lewis Beauchamp, "let the question be at once decided; this impetuous youth must be taught practically what he does not, or disdains to understand theoretically. There is an open space with a green sward close by, we will adjourn there; and my life on't, my friend, Michael Rycheart will defend his person as well as he has the maiden's honor."

As Ulfred could not raise any objection to Lord Lewis's proposition, they adjourned to the spot he had mentioned; and, without more words, each armed with a falchion, with which they were furnished, commenced to give and receive—SATISFACTION!

CHAPTER IV.

"Travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day." SHELLEY.

"What a deformed thief this fashion is! how
Giddily he turns about all the hot bloods, between
Fourteen and five-and-thirty! sometime fashioning
Them like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy painting;
Sometime like good Bel's priests in the old church
Window; sometime like the shaven Hercules in the
smirched
Worm-eaten tapestry."
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

"This fellow pecks up wit, as pigeons peas,
And utters it again when God doth please:
* * * *
This gallant pins the wenches on his sleeve;
Had he been Adam, he had tempted Eve:
He can carve too, and lisp: why this is he,
That kissed away his hand in courtesy;
This is the ape of form, Monsieur the nice:
* * * *
This is the flower that smiles on every one,
To show his teeth as white as whale's bone."
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

"On horror's head horrors accumulate:
* * * *
O grace! O heaven defend us!"
OTHELLO.

DAME TYLER, in obedience to the request made to her by Halbert Evesham upon the evening he, with his brother, had encountered Martin du Bois at her dwelling, visited him the next day, and held a conference with the two brothers, which lasted some time; her walk was slow as she returned, and her eyes were red, as though she had been weeping. When she entered her dwelling, Martin du Bois noticed the mournfulness of her aspect, and essayed with much skill to draw from her the cause, but in vain. He was aware that she had been to Halbert Evesham's, and consequently was more than anxious to learn what had transpired, but without success. After pursuing his subtle questions to the farthest limits he dared, he changed the subject, and referred to his own state. He drew from her the best plan he could pursue to restore him to health, and followed every portion of advice she gave him with the most scrupulous exactness, the result of which was to restore him rapidly to health and strength. A week had passed since Dame Tyler's interview with Halbert; and at the close of it he felt himself quite well enough to depart, and put in practice the schemes he had concerted. He observed, as he grew stronger, the dame and her husband grew more reserved. Prone to suspicion, he quickly noted their coolness, and was at no great loss to attribute it to the right cause; but he did not appear to be cognisant of it, and acted the same as if they were equally kind and attentive as they had been at first. When quite strong enough to depart, he suddenly feigned a relapse, in pursuance of a plan he had laid, and, pretending a sudden and excessive faintness, declared he would retire to bed, which he did. He had taken the opportunity of Martin Tyler's absence to affect this sudden illness, and determined to ascertain how far he might count yet upon the good offices of the worthy couple, ere he put his resolve of departing by stealth into execution. He had no sooner retired to his couch, than he heard the door of the entry unlatch, and the dame depart. He sprang from his bed upon the instant, and peered through the casement, which commanded a view in the direction of Halbert's dwelling, for which he observed the dame making with all speed.

"Ha!" he muttered, "I was right—I was right. 'Twas well conceived. By to-morrow, had I not feigned this weakness, I should have had the blood-hound upon me; but I'll trick him yet. So, so! the dame goes to carry the news of my relapse. 'Tis well; he will not attempt to draw his sword upon me until he thinks I am well able to wield it; the dame has told me as much. Fool! I will not give him the opportunity to wield it at all; a long knife buried in his back will pay off all I owe him. It shall be a deeper, surer blow, than that I brought Halbert down with. Hell and death! I will conquer that thrilling horror which palsies me when I am alone in dark places, or racks me with the tortures of the damned when I sleep. Why, I will shut out my sight when I stab him, that I may not see those ghastly, glaring eyes, as I did when——. S'death! if I suffer myself to raise that to my memory, it will unhinge me for my night's work. Now, to try my new strength for the first time. By the foul fiend! I hope it will not fail me at the moment I shall most need it. No! I feel it will not. The intense hatred and revenge I feel against him, shall nerve my arm with a giant's strength, and to the hilt I'll drive my blade in his heart."

While uttering the latter part of this soliloquy, he was engaged in quickly arraying himself in the garments he had but a short time previously divested himself of; and when he had completed his attire, he descended to the ground-floor, and arming himself with a sword and a long-bladed knife belonging to Martin Tyler, he took as well a dark mantle and flat woollen cap, which likewise were Martin Tyler's property, and disguised himself in them. Gently unclosing the latch, he peered around to see that no one was watching, and finding the way clear, he glided out, retreated to the back of the cottage, stole into a small grove of shrubs and trees near, awaited there a short time watching for a moment to enable him to proceed unobserved, which arriving, he took advantage to gain the nearest place of concealment; and so on, until he finally reached the wood, and then disappeared among the thickly-clustering trees.

He was right in his conjecture that Dame Tyler had gone to Halbert Evesham's, to acquaint them with his illness. He had been correct, too, in his supposition that Ethelbert had determined the succeeding day should not pass without a deadly meeting between them; but the good dame's intelligence made him alter his intention, and his waiting for his recovery materially delayed their intended journey to discover Editha and Ghita. He was induced by the strong persuasions of Halbert to forego his stern resolve, if not altogether, until at least some period more fitting than heretofore. It required many and powerful arguments on the part of Halbert to make his brother consent; for Dame Tyler having overheard Martin du Bois' revengeful mutterings, had failed not to make him acquainted with them. She saw too much danger in them to Violet, and, through her, to Wat's peace of mind, to suffer them to pass unheeded; and when Ethelbert knew of them, his motives for effectually preventing Martin carrying out any such villanous intentions were made too strong to lightly forego the chance, because a day or so was

involved in executing his efforts for that purpose. The principal cause of Halbert's success lay in the contempt which Ethelbert felt for Martin du Bois' ability to scheme and execute his projects; and though the dame had appealed urgently and strongly to him, to be most watchful in guarding Violet and himself from Martin's vindictive purposes, he laughed little less than scornfully at her fears, and treated his projects of revenge as powerless; still he felt strengthened in his determination to complete the vow of vengeance he had made against him, because he, after pretending contrition, harboured such vile thoughts and intents. He feared not all his efforts of villany, but he did that he should escape the punishment he merited. He had believed the time was come when he might inflict it, but this unlooked-for intelligence had snatched the opportunity from his grasp; for though he held Martin in such contempt, that he deserved not the consideration shown him, yet he could not, for his own conscience sake, stand up, a man in full health and strength, against one who wanted both, and, as he imagined, courage to boot. He cursed the chance which had robbed him of his desired revenge, and as Halbert so strongly pleaded his desire to no longer delay their journey, he gave up his purpose of waiting still longer, and agreed to depart on the morrow for the village which contained Editha and Ghita. Dame Tyler retired to her home; Violet and Flora, and Halbert and his brother, to their respective couches. The morn had not long dawned, and the sun scarce showing the edge of his disc upon the horizon, when Dame Tyler stood knocking hurriedly at Halbert's cottage door; it was quickly answered by Violet, and in compliance to an earnest request, Ethelbert in a few moments entered her presence. The instant she saw him, she exclaimed—

"He is gone—he is gone! some villany is on foot, I know—I missed him upon my return; I felt dreadfully alarmed, but I would not disturb you; my husband and I have kept watch around the house for fear you should have been surprised, but we have seen nothing of him. I am sure, however, he is somewhere about, plotting something horrible."

"Of whom do you speak, my good dame?" asked Ethelbert, surprised at the rapid and alarmed enunciation of the dame's words.

"Of whom should I speak, but that evil-minded youth, the snake, whom you told me I should foster until he stung me—Martin du Bois?"

"How! gone!" cried Ethelbert, with a sudden start, "when?—quick!—tell me!"

"Oh, yes! escaped! fled last night. His illness was feigned, done all to deceive, in order that he might steal away unstayed to perpetrate his horrid intentions. Oh, sir! be very watchful of dear Violet, and of yourself—he may, at some unguarded moment attack you, and succeed in his wickedness. I would to Heaven dear Wat was here, I should feel less alarm—would he were here."

"Would to Heaven he were," added Violet fervently. "I never had cause to fear while he was by my side—he ever anticipated danger, and prevented it harming me."

"You need not fear, Violet, that you will be less safe with me than were your favourite, the bold Wat Tyler, by your side," returned Ethelbert; "but in this case there is no cause for alarm; the wretch is too contemptible to waste a fear upon. But to set your minds at rest, I will take a circuit round the cottage; if he is near, I'll unkennel him, and draw his sting so effectually, as to to be unable to give any one cause for fear more:" so saying, he armed himself with a sword and knife, and quitted the cottage. The dame, being left alone with Violet, they discoursed of Wat—a theme of which neither grew tired, or felt as if it was a subject they could ever weary of; how strongly, and with what fond loquacity, did the dame speak in his praise, and how delightedly did Violet listen to her, sitting with twining fingers and downcast eyes, drinking in the lavished praises with devouring ears, and a panting but pleased heart. Their discourse was, however, interrupted by the entrance of Flora, and soon afterwards of Halbert, and then they seated themselves to their morning's repast, in the midst of which, Ethelbert returned and disclosed the ill-success of his journey; he had scoured every place likely to hold Martin du Bois, but had failed to meet with him, and he unhesitatingly declared him not to be near the place.

"The cowardly knave feared the fate I had designed for him, and would not hazard the chance he might have had to avert it," he said; "he has trusted to a quick pair of heels instead of his sword, which he suspects not to be so trustworthy, I imagine, as those he has used, and which Nature has furnished him with. Well, let him go, Heaven will one day hereafter punish him, if I should fail here."

"It is, perhaps, better as it is," observed Halbert.

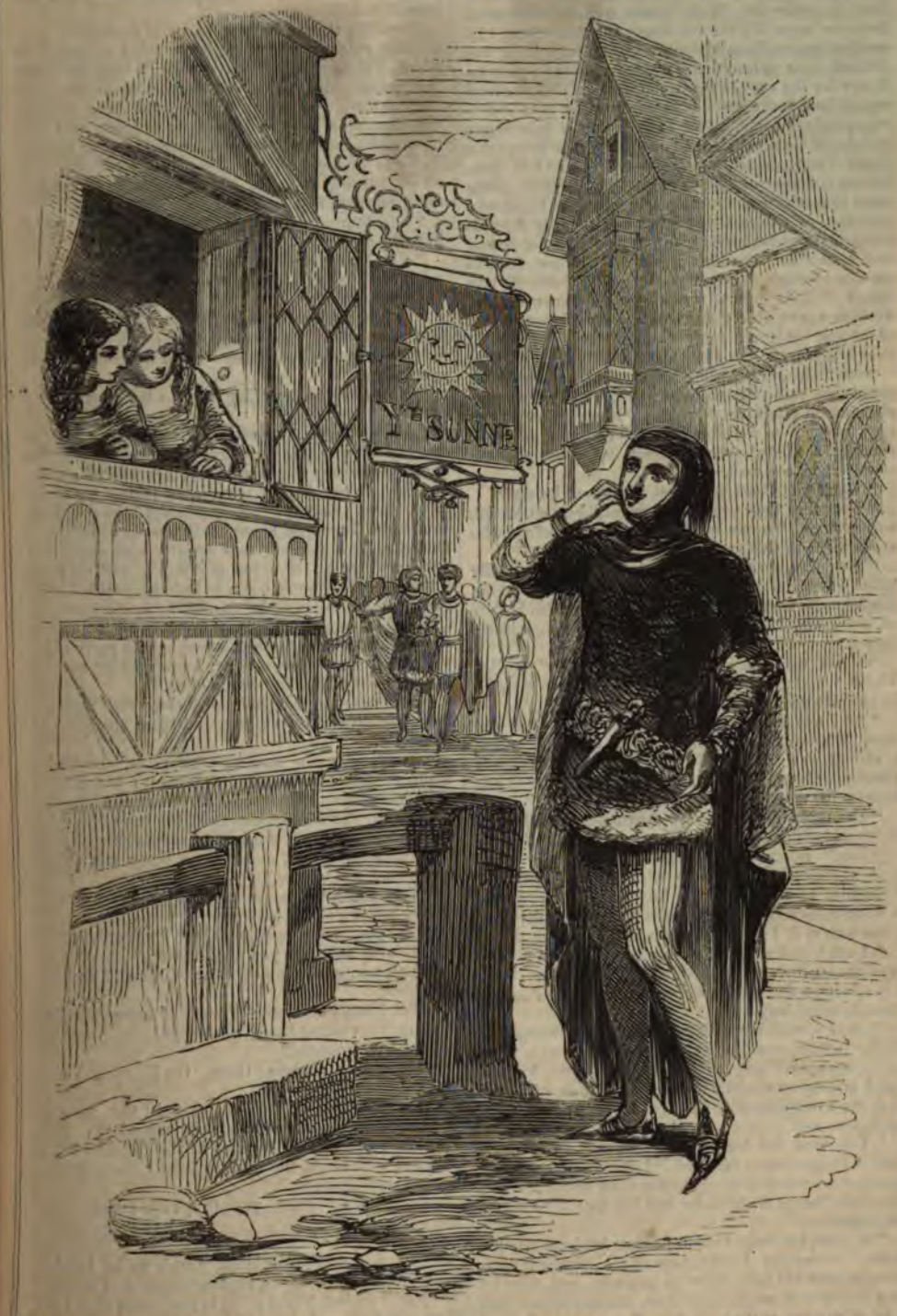
"It may be," rejoined Ethelbert, "but I would rather it had been as I could have wished." He then joined them in their meal, and when it was concluded, they commenced preparing for their immediate departure.

It had been agreed that Martin Tyler and his dame should have the charge of Halbert's dwelling and all it contained until his return, if he should be fortunate enough to do so. His purpose was, that, if successful in discovering the wife who had been so long separated from him, he would return with her to Brenchley; if not, and by any unforeseen chance he was prevented, the property was to become Violet's; and in the event of her not requiring it, it was bequeathed to Wat Tyler. Ethelbert, who had property of his own in another part of the country, not needing any more, was unmentioned in this bequest, save in his capacity of an assistant and witness to the deed. The arrangements for leaving everything behind them securely, were well made, and those for their journey not less so, and nothing now remained but to mount their steeds and depart. Flora had obtained the consent of her parents to accompany Violet, and had contrived that Michael's mother should alternately take up her residence with her parents and at Halbert's cottage while she was away. There was a strong muster of the villagers, to say farewell to him who had been esteemed the beloved friend to all in the little village for so many years, and to her who had been its idol—for whom the boldest and the best in it had risked their lives. They all declared, that now Wat Tyler, Michael, Halbert, Violet, and Flora, were lost to the village, Brenchley would be no longer like itself. Many of the youths wished much to accompany them, at least some part of their journey—young aspirants for the love of Violet and Flora, who, seeing Wat and Michael absent, hoped that there was some little chance for them; but their offers were kindly though firmly declined; and when the sun reached an hour past the meridian they departed, bidding farewell to their humble but honest friends, and turning their backs upon the place in which they had dwelled so long, and until lately, so happily.

The party consisted of six persons; viz., Halbert and his brother Ethelbert; Ulph, who was to be the guide on the occasion; Gurth, a favourite serving man belonging to Halbert; Violet, and Flora. They were well mounted; the men on strong steeds, Violet on one

which Wat had taken great pains to break in for her and present her with, and Flora upon one which Michael had given her, which he had got at the same time Wat

blood, as his friend had done with the one Violet rode. There had been few dry eyes when they parted from their friends; but when they entered the wood



got his, a colt, and had taken the same trouble to render it tractable and docile, though possessing high

through which lay their way, Ethelbert strove not unsuccessfully to raise their spirits. It was a sunny,

clear afternoon. Warm, but not too much so; for the long alleys of the thickly foliaged trees,

"With golden and green light slanting through."

made a draught for the air, which came in cool breezes, fanning gently the cheek, which might the moment previous have felt the sun linger too long there. It was fast approaching Midsummer, and everything was clothed in its richest dress, making sweet and pleasant things for the eyes to gaze upon, as they clustered and waved here and there. The beauty their eyes everywhere lighted upon, made their discourse in a degree partake of their nature, and soon the great depression which Violet, Flora, and Halbert, too, had felt upon leaving the dear old place behind them, was giving place to a calmer and more placid feeling. Violet now and then, as she recalled to her memory her forcible peregrinations through the forest by the wretches who had seized her, shuddered, but felt no fear that in passing through it now she should be liable to any attack of a like nature, even though she knew Martin du Bois was at liberty, and had expressed his intention of getting her into his power. The devils—thanks to dear Wat, for to him alone she attributed their defeat—were no longer prowling in the wood, and there was protection sufficient with her to do away with any alarm at an attack from wolves. Flora's mind, however, was not so well fortified, and giving a quivering shudder, she leant over to Violet, by whose side she closely rode, and said,—

"Don't you think the forest looks very lonely?"

"Not more than you might expect," replied Violet, with a smile, "as we are the only human beings who are in sight in this vast place."

"I wonder if all those horrid robbers were really killed or made prisoners," Flora ejaculated, looking suspiciously from side to side. "Do you think they all were, Violet? I don't think *all* of them could be, do you?"

"I was told they were by Wat Tyler," replied Violet, "and you know, Flora, he would not say so if he had not good reason for speaking the truth."

"Ah! but he only believed they were, he was not sure," she argued; "and if there were some left, which I should not wonder if there were, and they were prowling about, and were to attack us, and rob and murder us, what should we do?"

"Die, most likely!" observed Ethelbert, laughingly, in reply, having overheard the remark.

"Yes," returned Flora, nothing relieved; "and that is enough to make us wish we had never left Brenchley to come through this long lonely wood; wouldn't it have been comfortable if Wat and Michael had come with us? I should have cared for nothing then."

"I am afraid your two heroes would not be able to save you, if there were many of the devils loose," said Ulph, with a face pulled by recollection much longer than its usual length.

"Oh, I should not be afraid of anything or anybody in the whole world, if Wat and Michael were with us," ejaculated Flora, hastily; "should you, Violet? but I know you would not—they don't fear anything, they are so courageous, and know how to use their swords so well."

"You speak the truth, pretty Flora," said Ethelbert, "I can answer for that. I have not seen any man use a sword more gallantly than either Wat or Michael; though if the latter had less tongue he might do better."

"Ah, but his tongue spoils neither his head nor his heart," exclaimed Flora instantly, a crimson flush passing over her face, "nor his courage; and were he to talk twice as much as he does, he would not lose a jot of any one of those qualities."

Ethelbert laughed. "He has a good heart and plenty of courage," he replied; "I only meant to say if he talked less he might think more, and act with judgment where he too frequently acts from impulse."

Flora felt that to be true, and said no more.

"But you may quite set your mind at rest," he added, "if you fear that any of Grif's band will start from some hiding place and pounce upon you; you may take my word there are none left here to do it, and if we meet with nothing more to alarm and hurt us than I expect to find here, we perform our journey with the greatest safety. You lived some time," he added, turning to Ulph, "in the Forest of Dean, I think you said?"

"Yes, four years—four horribly long years, which were far more like four hundred."

"You know the forest well, of course?"

"Rather too well for my peace of mind while there."

"How mean you?"

"I was frequently sent out as a spy, disguised first in one dress, then another. I think I told you I was never exactly fool-hardy—never really cared to be over-valiant."

"No: so much the other way, as to be very like a coward."

"I believe you are not far off the truth. Well, it was my duty to lead travellers into the heart of the band, where they could see resistance was of no use, and save a great deal of trouble, by taking the award of the band passively. In my flittings here and there, sometimes I popped almost into the very jaws of a horrid wolf; some enormous monster who would have swallowed me up in a few mouthfuls, and thanking fortune for that much, begin to look out for his dinner. By the way, we must be careful to avoid them, for they infest some parts of the wood in such numbers they would think nothing of attacking the party of us; and, in all human probability, leave nothing but our bones to tell what had become of us."

"I thought the band had slaughtered such numbers, that they only appeared here and there singly," said Ethelbert.

"That's only the case in some parts," responded Ulph, "where they themselves inhabit; but in other parts they encourage the breed, because a traveller attacked by them gallops away at the top of his speed right into the arms of the band, which are always open ready to receive him, and then a party sets to and drives back the wolves."

"You know the parts infested by the wolves? said Ethelbert, interrogatively.

"Oh! yes," he replied, quickly, "I was only a short time finding out that, you may be sure."

"And you can guide us clear of them?" enquired Ethelbert.

"Yes I can, but it will be a task of some difficulty; because, in avoiding them, we may fall plump into the power of the robbers."

"There are robbers there, too!" said Violet, anxiously.

"Yes," replied Ethelbert; "it is the curse of England that she is overrun with marauders; there is not a weald or wild fastness in the kingdom but is crowded with them, the more especially the forest we have to pass through."

"Is there no other way to go?" asked Flora, alarmedly.

"None."

"Oh! dear," she ejaculated, "can't we be left behind while they go?" she inquired eagerly of Violet.

"Nay," replied Violet; "it is important that I go, Flora; but if you feel afraid to accompany me, say so

without hesitation, and Gith shall see thee safely back again. Do not fear to say so; I cannot feel offended at your obeying the dictates of an alarm which it is natural should possess you."

"No, no, Violet!" exclaimed Flora, hastily; "I confess I feel afraid; but where you go I go. I would not leave you if a thousand deaths stared me in the face, my dear kind friend, my more than sister; if we are to die in the horrible place, we will die in each other's arms, and never murmur—will we?"

"Dear Flora!" murmured Violet, affected by her words, uttered with such earnest enthusiasm, while the large tears glistened like diamonds in her eyes.

"Do not let such thoughts possess you!" exclaimed Ethelbert; "there is time enough to think of death when the danger comes; it is the failing of a woman to imagine that nothing but death can come of any sudden danger. Since you have been employed in the rogue's service as a spy, Ulph," he continued, addressing him, "you ought to be well able to guide us so as to avoid either the robbers or the wolves."

"Trust me, you will not have to want my best endeavours to do so," replied Ulph. "I have such an intuitive horror of both, that I shall be but too eager to keep out of their company. I have had much experience in the Forest of Dean and in this, and have very good cause to know how to use my eyes, when engaged in such a task as keeping clear of their clutches; indeed, I used to practise it.

"Practise it?" echoed Ethelbert.

"Aye! when sent on some spying expedition, I was always disguised, and used to try what I could do to avoid being seen by any of the band, in order that I might some day be well able to avail myself of any chance I might have to escape; it was a dangerous practice, though, for several times I was shot at by some of the band who caught sight of me prowling about, and, being in a strange dress, mistook me for a traveller. I was fortunately never wounded; I was generally too much on the alert for that, and hesitated not a second to disclose myself before another shaft could be levelled at me; at other times, when I, without being seen, observed any of them approaching, I would bolt down into a covert, and pop, perhaps, right on to a lurking wolf, frightening me horribly; and sometimes had no small difficulty to escape from their fangs, but I was pretty lucky—I was never shot or bitten; and in time could thread my way so well that I could, if I pleased, elude the sharpest-sighted member of the band."

"How comes it," asked Ethelbert, "that you did not make use of your advantage to escape?"

"Just as I was thinking about it, Grif suddenly came here, and brought me with him, and I had the same thing to do here, if I wished to escape, but I began to grow despondent, and gave up all thoughts of it. I have often wished heaven had given me a little more courage; there was nothing could make me desire to live, no bad action of my own to make me fear to die. Brought up from my earliest recollection to work hard—cuffed, beaten, kicked on all sides, until I grew older, and then there was only one person in the world who cared for me; and just as I thought I could make her mine, and look forward for a little happiness, I was torn from her to go through a series of miseries I would not subject a hound to; and yet I was, with every motive for death strong upon me, afraid of losing my life in the most trivial dangers, in which others would laughingly mix. I wish I knew why this is. I have no care now to live one hour longer, for I have nothing to look forward to—neither friends, home, love, anything; and yet I know that if we were to get into any danger, however slight, this dreadful tremor would settle on my nerves, and render me incapable of doing anything to defend either you or myself—that I should run away, if I could, or do anything to save my life."

"Then we may not count upon your aid in case of attack," said Ethelbert, with a curl of the upper lip he could neither prevent nor conceal.

"Oh no, no; I would if I could, but I know I can't; my heart is more timid than a woman's or a hare's. I can advise you how to avoid the danger we may expect to meet, or perhaps how to get out of it if we should be surrounded and taken, but I should be too alarmed to get my sword out of the sheath, much less use it. I am ashamed to confess this, particularly before maidens; but it is no use deceiving you, and I can't help it."

"Didn't think there was anybody like you in the world," uttered Gith, laconically, with some surprise; "mistaken, I find, but shouldn't ha' thought it." Then he opened his mouth in a wide grin, but it was a silent laugh; he uttered no sound, but appeared to enjoy it with the most intense satisfaction.

"Well, your counsel may stand us in better stead than if you wielded your sword," exclaimed Ethelbert; "therefore do your best to freshen your memory, that you may be at no loss to exercise it at a moment's notice, when essential."

"I shall want nothing to make me remember; my memory is very tenacious, and I recollect every spot as well as if I was there only yesterday."

"It is well," returned he, "I have little doubt but what we shall get safely through. I have some knowledge myself of the place, which, added to yours, will, I dare say, enable us to pass through this infested forest without molestation."

"I hope so," ejaculated Flora; "but I can't help wishing Wat and Michael were with us; can you, Violet?"

Violet assented with a slight shake of the head, and an eye in which lurked a smile, but said nothing. Flora, however, felt no disposition to smile, and watched the countenances of their male companions with an anxious scrutiny, as they continued talking over the prospects of their journey through the Forest of Dean; many times she thought what a pity it was that Ulph should be of such a frightened nature; she could not see why he should not be as courageous as the rest. Flora would have felt the value of a man's courage more at ease if she had known Ulph to be brave; but knowing him to be a coward, having it strongly put before her, the bravery of the rest went for nothing; and she was a very short time in arriving at the conclusion, that a robber had but to show his nose and they would all become his prisoners on the instant; the consequence was her scrutiny of every dark looking copse was incessant, and her anxious watching of the men's countenances untiring, as, perhaps, the harsh scream of a bird or the howl of a wolf would rise on the air. Ever and anon she would start and look round her if a steed stumbled, throwing her eyes with a slight shudder over her shoulder, and at the same time wishing most heartily that they had reached their destination, instead of just commencing it. She did not like to communicate her fears to Violet in case she might insist on her return—an act she would have no objection to, if Violet would accompany her; but as the gratification of such a desire was hopeless, she held her tongue and kept her fears in silence to herself.

"You were never in London, Violet?" said Ethelbert, suddenly, after having a long conversation with Halbert.

"No," she replied, "unless I visited it before I was old enough to know aught of any place."

"You passed through it when little more than an infant," said Halbert.

"We shall be able to remain there part of a day, for our way lies through it; and you will then see a place of which Brenchley can give you no idea," exclaimed Ethelbert.

"I have heard much of its wealth, and houses, which are like palaces, its ships, and its Tower; but I have believed many of the stories I have heard to be little better than fiction. I shall now, at least, have an opportunity of judging of the truth of what I have heard," said Violet, in reply.

"Ah," said Flora, "I never was there at all. It must be a wonderfully fine place for a king to live at; but Wat Tyler, so Michael told me, said the king's palace was no handsomer, indeed not so handsome, as the Cathedral at Canterbury, and that I have seen. But somebody in the village, who had been to London once, said the smallest merchants' houses were much larger than the Cathedral, and the largest was an unaccountable large one. It must be a grand place, with such fine houses, and kings, and earls, and dukes to live in them, but it's a terrible place, too, for wickedness. With all its grandeur, I think I would rather live in dear little Brenchley than there: wouldn't you, Violet?"

"I would," replied Violet. "My ideas of happiness are completely independent of grandeur: and the associations connected with Brenchley would render it far dearer to me than any other spot in the world, however grand and mighty."

"Oh, yes, dear, dear Brenchley!" responded Flora; "there would be no place in the world like it—if—if—" she hesitated—

"Michael were there," whispered Violet, supplying the hiatus.

Flora hung her head, and a tear gathered in her eyelid, but she spoke not a word.

"I was in London for a little while with my brother Grif," said Ulph, "and he took me among the thieves, cut-throats, and cut-purses there. Such an assemblage of swaggering, bullying gentry you never clapped your eyes on—quite another sort of people to the robbers I had been accustomed to mix with. The forest robbers were all rough, uncouth, swearing, careless rascals; but your London rogues are of another and a higher class. They dress i' the fashion, curl their fierce mustachioes up towards their eyes, swear by their *honour*, bluster, frown, and open their mouths as if they were going to swallow you at a mouthful every time they talk. They are gentlemen cavaliers—if you believe their own account—who live by the exercise of their wits, and rob the unwary, the honest, and the wealthy, with a grace of which your forest thief has no idea; and when unoccupied in the exercise of their plundering profession upon strangers, they rob each other at games of chance, over which it is customary for the one in ill luck to doubt his antagonist's strict honesty, and the usual termination of the game consists in ridding society of one of these gentlemen cavaliers, by the insertion of a fourteen-inch blade into his ribs. I had—God help me!—seen much villany, as bad, I thought, as could be; but in London I saw more detestable crime, more bloodshed, less compunction, and a greater refinement of cruelty and wickedness, than I could have believed had existed. That one visit satisfied me with regard to London, and I care not if I never step foot in it more."

"You had only a one-sided view of it," returned Ethelbert. "Society there consist of several distinct classes, and had you been taken by one moving in an opposite sphere, you would have believed there could be nought so beautiful or grand, or good, in the universe. London is great in all things—in crime and in virtue; in it you will find the most execrable villany and the utmost degree of virtue; murder and rapine will salute you at one corner; and benevolence, integrity, and purity at the next; and the medium of both in other parts. It is a mere compound of good and evil in a large space, and you have the power of extracting either as your inclination directs you. However, London, be it what it may, will not affect us, for we shall not stay in it long enough to be benefitted by its virtue, or contaminated by its vice."

"Could'nt we get a party of men to come with us and protect us on our journey through that dreadful dreary forest you have been speaking of?" asked Flora, suddenly, her countenance lighted up with animation as if she had hit upon a good thought.

"We could get plenty of men, if we needed them, by paying them handsomely," replied Ethelbert, "but they would not be of any service to us—rather a disadvantage; inasmuch, to make them essentially useful, we must hire a large troop, and then it is doubtful whether they would do their duty properly in case of attack; but if they did, we must take enough to render victory in no degree doubtful; if we took a less number, we should only swell our numbers, without being a jot more safe."

"Not so safe," interrupted Ulph; "you may be sure I shall counsel for the best. I would rather go with a great number if it would benefit us, than a small; but in going through the Forest of Dean, our only chance is to pass through undiscovered, and of course the fewer the party the better the chances; there are such numbers infest it that it would take a large troop indeed to overcome them; they are in such a good system of communication with each other, that they can unite in a very short time, and, with the natural advantages of their position well known to them, and how to be applied, it would be next to impossible to rout them, and the attempt would, in all probability, end in our all dangling from the branches of the surrounding trees—a fate I have seen many a poor fellow undergo. No, no, we must keep close and quiet, and I think I can guide you safely by them unobserved."

"Oh, pray do!" ejaculated Flora, "you can't think how much we shall all be obliged to you if you do; besides, you know, a failure may cost you your life as well as us, and you wouldn't like that, would you?"

"Not if I could in any way avoid it," responded Ulph, emphatically.

Conversing thus the time passed away, if not agreeably, at least quickly, and by nightfall they reached the hostelry which Wat, in his journey to London, had put up at. They remained there for the night, and in the morning early departed for London: it was rather beyond mid-day when they reached it, and they stopped at a hostel in Cheapside, and rested the whole of that day there, intending to remain in London the following day, and depart the succeeding one to Gloucestershire. The weather was very beautiful; and when the fatigue of their long ride had in some measure worn off, and they were refreshed by a repast spread before them, of which they had all partaken heartily, Ethelbert, Halbert, and Ulph, started out for a walk, leaving Gith with Violet and Flora, who declined accompanying them, but amused themselves by looking from their window upon the many passers by, as well as upon the thickly clustered houses, which, as Flora observed with much disappointment, though much larger and handsomer than the dwellings at Brenchley,

were certainly not to be compared to the Cathedral at Canterbury. They were much amused by the different garbs of the passengers to and fro. Here were the long-robed merchants, with long streaming sleeves; the tradesman and the apprentice in their close fitting woollen tunics, with the capuchon or cowl twisted into various shapes, and worn in a staid manner by the grave citizen, or jauntily balanced on the head by the smart apprentice or would-be gallant; now sauntered by the gallants, in their tight cotehardies, buttoned down the front, barely reaching below the hips, confined there by a handsome girdle, the garment itself composed of the richest materials, occasionally party-coloured, and usually splendidly embroidered; the sleeves terminated at the elbow, and from thence descended tippets, long and white, looking like streamers, waving here and there; their hose, too, were party-coloured, and the shoes encompassing their feet were long-pointed, of Bohemian shape, and manufactured of cloth of gold. They wore falchions occasionally, mostly the French rapier; their head-dress was, perhaps, the most singular part of this costume, being a capuchon attached to a cape, which was buttoned close up to the chin, and had a long tail which hung down behind. These gentry seemed to be of another mould of beings to those who were hurrying past them to and fro, and jostling against them, drawing from them an oath of the most approved fashion, for disarranging in their rude progress garments arranged with such care, and, as they believed, taste. There was not a maiden passing who could boast the slightest pretension to a pretty face, who was not honoured by a long impudent stare. Absorbed in watching so new and strange a scene to them, almost confused by the endless stream of people backwards and forwards, they had not noticed that one individual, dressed in the most extravagant fashion, had passed and repassed, and at length stood opposite the window, but, to his surprise, his presence was still unheeded. He was arrayed in the costume of the gallants already described, with the addition of a very long mantle, lined with the finest grey fur, and attached to the right shoulder by five large buttons; the edges were indented in the form of leaves, worked in the most elaborate manner. This was a garment which particularly distinguished the nobility, and, except by great fop, was never worn but upon state occasions. The wearer having settled himself into an attitude which he flattered himself was irresistible, turned a pretty, but not handsome face, garnished with peculiarly neatly-trimmed mustachioes, up to the window, and after in vain waiting for a glance from the fair eyes upon which he was gazing, he gave a gentle hem and kissed his hand, which was gloved with white lambskin, in the most graceful manner, in order to attract attention to him, being, he believed, the first time he had ever had occasion to do so, his exceeding pleasant personal appearance having hitherto saved him the trouble. The exclamation from Flora suddenly accompanied by a point of her finger to the object, of "Oh, Violet! look there!" induced her to turn her head, and perceive this pink of gallants looking all languishment and blandishment upon her. He kissed his hand again in the tenderest manner, and she looked upon him with no little astonishment—astonishment, not admiration; there was, unpleasantly for him, no doubt of that. She supposed, at the first moment, that she must be acquainted with him, but a second glance convinced her that she was not, the more especially as she heard him exclaim in the softest modulation of voice,—

"Celestial powers! What supassing divinity of countenance! Oh, my ravished soul! drink not too deeply of this transcendent loveliness, or my spirits will be wafted into unalloyed realms of eternal bliss, and being so far beyond human ability of endurance, never more return to this dull clod of earth, leaving my burning frame an inanimate shell, a wreck, a nothing."

Overcome by the pathos and enthusiasm of his own words, he shut his eyes until he had uttered the last word of the rhapsody, and then looking up again at its conclusion with a most affecting air, to his very great wonder he found the window tenantless: he rubbed his eyes quickly, not exactly a pretty action, but an impulsive one, and fancied he caught a glimpse of one of their heads disappearing. He instantly ejaculated,—

"Angel of love and beauty! fly me not! Ah, drive me not to distraction; engloom not my happiness with the cloud of thy dark disdain: abide thee, sweet mistress! take not from me thy sunny presence, leaving me sightless, enveloped by thy absence in the gloom of the light of day; render me not the miserablest, wretchedest, unhappiest of hapless mortals."

He waited for some time for a token even of an intention to return; but waited in vain. He uttered a few more rhapsodical speeches, but without having the effect he intended; and the miserablest, wretchedest, and unhappiest of hapless mortals, despairing of obtaining his end by standing there, entered the hostel to make inquiries, being a very terrestrial, but about the best way of finding out who that lady with "the surpassing divinity of countenance" was. He accosted the host, who was a short man, with a short nose, and a short manner of speaking.

"Pray, my worthy retailer of esculents and vinous fluids," he commenced, but was interrupted by the vintner with a short—

"Anan?"

"I mean," he replied, "my good host, canst thou make plain to my understanding one thing?"

"I doubt it."

"Doubt it, man! why?" echoed and interrupted the gallant.

"Because I shouldn't suppose you gallants could understand anything; there's very few can—I never found any; all fools from top to toe, dress and tongue: they have but one sense, and that's nonsense. Hem!"

"You are peculiarly candid—I may say, very blunt."

"I speak truth; you find it disagreeable, perhaps?"

"Your vulgarity I do, tremendously. Are you not afraid that your excessive uncouthness to such as myself, who have money to spend, would ruin your trade, eh?"

"No; my trade does not depend upon 'nothing,' or next to nothing; I serve the merchants, not the fopling popinjays."

"You've a young wife, and daughters, perhaps, eh?"

"What's that to you?"

"Not much—merely the secret of your rudeness. But be not alarmed at me; *I* never intrigue with such, believe me."

"Alarmed at you! Ho! ho! Well, truly; ha! ha!"

"You laugh—I might astonish you yet."

"You would, mightily, if you made me fear anything from you. But this parleying is not business; do you want anything to drink or eat?"

"I want a question or so answered; here are two golden lionines, they shall be followed by a handful more if you satisfy me well."

"Keep your money; I sell liquors, meats, and bread, not answers. What do you wish to know?"

"I saw two very beauteous damsels at a window

of thy house, just above the entry door. Who, and what are they?"

"Guests."

"True; I could have surmised as much. But what is their condition?"

"I don't know."

"Where do they come from?"

"I don't know."

"Hem! how distressing! Where do they go when they leave here!"

"I don't know."

"Dear me! how long will they stop here?"

"I don't know."

"Will they stay a few days, think you?"

"I can't tell."

"What are their names?"

"I don't know."

"Damn it, man! you know nothing."

"We cannot quarrel about that, then; being alike on that point."

"Don't be impertinent; recollect the difference between us."

"I do; I am not likely to forget it."

"It is well: can I be presented to the ladies?"

"Do you know them?"

"Why—a—not exactly know them."

"Do they know you?"

"Why—a—no; they've seen me, though." This was said in a tone which indicated that he esteemed it quite introduction sufficient, as well as rather a strong reason why they should wish to see him again. The host did not happen to view it in the same light, so replied,—

"Then I can't have anything to do with it. Good den."

"I'm not going yet. Bring me a stoup of wine."

"Which?"

"Your best Rhenish—no, stay, let it be Malmsey; I am in no cue for aught but what is sweet and choice. Ah me!"

The host smiled with supreme contempt as he trotted off to obey the order, and in a short time introduced his short person with the wine of Malvasia.

"You have brought only one drinking cup," exclaimed the gallant; "we must have two, for you must drink with me."

"I'm obliged, but I don't drink Malmsey—ale is my liquor."

"Draw thyself some ale, then, and seat thyself by me; thou'rt rough, but I like thy peculiarities."

Again the host disappeared, and once more appeared, bearing a full jug of ale, and a tolerable sized horn to drink it with; he placed them by the side of the Malmsey, and then seated himself close by the gallant, who filled his cup with wine, and motioned for the host to do the like with his ale; he obeyed, and then, saluting each other, each quaffed their separate beverage, and a conversation ensued, which it would be unnecessary to repeat. The gallant, however, taking advantage of his host's occasional turn of the head, poured best part of the Malmsey, at various times, into the ale, pretending to be drinking hard all the while. The host, feeling within himself that he should be next to contemptible did he not empty his jug of ale to the "smock-faced" gallant's stoup of wine, drank hard in reality, wondering, every now and then, at the extraordinarily improved flavour of the ale. The fumes were fast mounting to his brain, but he did not notice it, in his pleasure that his ale—it was a new brewing—should have turned out so wondrously delicious. His shortness of speech was fast wearing away before the influence of the liquor; and the gallant proceeding in praise of his wine and him, made a conquest which he had much rather been over the lady he had seen at the window. The host, getting "drunk exceedingly," seized his hand, and vowed he was a worthy blade, and not a tittle like the fops and knaves whose garments were all so nagged and knib on every side, so shattered and buttoned, short and strait-waisted, that they made them strut and swagger like peacocks, and deem their very fathers, though honest men, perhaps, distant acquaintances, whom it was imprudent to remember, unless they wanted money.

"No, no," quoth he, "thou'rt none of those gibing, fantastical, bedizened, prankish varlets, with more money than wit, and very little of either; all outsides, all outsides; nothing in head or purse; just like a gaudy peacock, all their worth's in their plumage; you're none of these, I can see with half an eye"—he saw double just then—and it was very likely he would not soon be able to see at all.

"I feel flattered and raised up to the sixteenth heaven of self-approbation at thy good opinion of me," observed the gallant, perceiving that the host was really looking at him 'with half an eye,' the drink preventing his eyelids from extending to their natural width; "it is almost too much for a mere mortal like myself to bear if you really think so; but you will prove it to me incontestibly, if you will get me speech of the ladies I mentioned to you a short time since—"

"Bah!" uttered the host, "you will make me think—you will make me think—I never tasted such exceeding good ale since tapster I've been; taste it—won't you?—oh, very well, keep to your—Ma—hic—Ma'msey; I warrant me it's nothing like my ale—"

"But the ladies!" suggested the gallant, a little impatiently.

"No, nor the ladies—the ladies—oh, ay, I forgot—don't talk about them any—hic—m—hic—more; I shall begin to think you as bad as the rest. I tell you I have a wife and two girls, and I am pestered out of my—hic—m—hic—my life through them; I won't let one of the flaunting knaves come to my house; and if you begin to—hic—to—hic—talk about women before me, out you go—hic—that's all—hic."

"Hollo! here, friend; come hither," suddenly cried the gallant, observing Gith coming through the apartment. Gith approached, and he said to him,—

"Do you dwell here?"

"For a day or so I do; why?"

"Take some wine first—talking will make you thirsty, unless you drink beforehand."

"Try the—hic—ale," hiccupped the host, trying to look up at Gith, and finding it no easy matter to accomplish it. He, however, at last succeeded, and exclaimed with surprise, "Why, it's the ladies' servant!"

"Indeed," muttered the gallant, "so much the better. Come host, bestir thyself; let us have another stoup of wine—this is empty."

"Let him taste the ale," said the host, showing no disposition to leave his seat.

"You have drunk it nearly all," replied the gallant; "there's not enough left to offer a man without insulting him. Bring us more wine."

"Oh, certainly, if you order it. But, I say, what's your name?" said the host to Halbert's servant.

"Gith," he replied.

"Gi—hic—Gith. Well, Gith, take my advice, and taste the ale."

"Have which you please; ale or Malmsey," said the gallant.

"What sort of liquor is Malmsey?" asked Gith.

"Taste this," replied the gallant, offering him some still left in the wine stoup. Gith tasted it, smacked his lips, and declared instantly in favour of the Malmsey. The host was therefore despatched for it. He took a deliberate aim at the door, but went very wide of his mark. However, by dint of perseverance, he hit it at last and disappeared. As soon as he had left, the gallant laid hold of Gith's arm, and said, quickly—

"I want you to do me a slight service, will you? you shall be well paid."

"What is it?" asked Gith.

"The host has a very pretty little daughter, between whom and I there is a sort of a love affair—"

"You said Ma—hic—ma—a—'msey, I think?" spluttered the host, suddenly poking his head in at the door.

"Yes, Malmsey," cried the gallant, startled for a moment by his sudden appearance; "be quick, my good fellow, we are waiting for it."

"Malmsey," muttered the host, making a hiatus in uttering the word, "I thought it was that—I thought so. 'Be quick'—hic—yes, it's very easy to say be quick—hic—but how do you do it?"

There was some reason in his asking the question, for his shoulder was leaning against the door-post, and his feet were such a distance from it, that the necessary exertion to change him from a diagonal to a perpendicular line was somewhat more than he could manage; and as his feet were edging away fast, and still further from the door, it was apparent that, unless he received assistance, his face would leave the door for the floor. Gith went to his aid, and having restored him to his equilibrium, he departed once more for the Malmsey. When he had staggered away, the gallant again addressed Gith.

"The service I require of you is simply this: I wish to exchange a few words with the loveliest of her sex, and through the relentless tyranny of her uncouth parent, I am denied that immeasurable felicity; he is now in such a state of inebriation that he is not exactly conscious of anything. So, when he returns, if you will engage him in talk, I will slip away and have the interchange of a few words of adoration with my beloved, and return without his being cognisant of my absence."

"What are your intentions to the girl?" asked Gith, bluntly.

The gallant looked at him for a moment, but perceiving the question dictated by a sound feeling of honesty, he thought it best to humour it; and, placing his hand upon his heart, replied,—

"Oh, honourable—strictly honourable, of course. But her father, having an unreasonable distaste to people of my order, forbids our thinking of each other. And you must know, my good friend, that God did not give us hearts for our fathers and mothers to do as they please with, give away, or sell, just as it suits their convenience; and so we still love each other, in spite of all opposition, and intend to wed as soon as we can. So you see the service you can do me by complying with my wish."

"Well, since everything is fair and honourable, you say, I don't mind; I might have wanted such a friend myself, and should have thought it very hard if any one I had asked held back and denied me, and so I don't mind if I do; but mind, you must not be long, nor attempt to deceive me—for though thy garments are noble and fashioned of velvet and gold, and mine only of rustic woollen, yet you shall find our steel of one sort of metal; so beware thou dost not get me into any scrape by tricks or knavish play."

"Never fear, good fellow, it is as I say," returned the gallant, striving to keep down the haughty indignation he felt at the free speech of Gith—a serving man—but he contrived not to appear to notice it, and assuming more frankness and less foppery, continued, "the maiden's own 'haviour and good sense is sufficient safeguard and surety that I should not play her false; but no more of that—you have not been in London long?"

"I came to-day for the first time."

"Indeed! you will find it a wonderful place; you must see it all before you go again—perhaps you are going to stop?"

"No, we leave here for Gloucestershire the day after to-morrow."

"Gloucestershire! that is a long distance. Did you come from there?"

"No; Kent."

"Ah! what part? I know the whole county well."

"Brenchley."

"Is it possible! I know it well; does your family bear the name of Bottelier?"

"No; Evesham."

"Oh, I know, and the daughter is famed for her beauty; she is called—out upon my thick skull, that I should forget the name I have so often heard."

"Violet."

"Ah, Violet!—beauteous name—Violet Evesham. Yes, yes, I remember; she is with you now, is she not?"

"Yes, she and a friend are here with her foster-father and uncle."

"She is very lovely?"

"Yes, I should think that she is, too!—why, she was the idol of the village."

At this moment in staggered the landlord, bearing the stoup of wine, and another jug of ale; he darted forward into the room, and to save himself pitching on his head, he threw himself a little back so suddenly, as to spill a quantity of the contents of both jugs over himself—to prevent a repetition of which, Gith rescued them from his hands, placed them upon the table, and then helped him to a seat, which he sunk heavily into; he was barely seated when he seized the ale, and took a long pull at it, but when he took it from his mouth he made a wondrous wry face, and vowed the devil was in the liquor, for now it was as bitter as before it was sweet. Gith soon managed to engage his attention so completely, that the gallant contrived to slip away, unperceived by the host, and when he got clear of the apartment, he mounted a flight of stairs and gained a corridor, muttering to himself, as he proceeded cautiously along the dark passage—

"Well, let me see, I have done better than I could have believed—I should have made a wondrous lawyer; beshrew me 'twas well imagined and dexterously managed! Violet Evesham, the idol of Brenchley, with a fair female friend, whose name is of no consequence at present, (though by the way, a gallant might do worse than have her for a mistress,) a foster-father, and an uncle; for, certes, I hope the last two people are not within; no matter, I must take my chance. I know enough to scrape an acquaintance upon—now for the room; let me see, it was over the penthouse of the door, and which way does the door lie from here?—confound it, I forget. Let me see, how did I get into that infernal hole below? hang me if I can remember: egad! I shall be thrown out of some cursed high window, now, for intruding into the wrong room, I shouldn't wonder; well, I must trust to my wits—they will not fail me, I am sure."

He proceeded cautiously along, and finding a door at the end of the corridor which he imagined to overlook the street, and in all probability to be the right one, he tapped gently at it, and after waiting a moment

or two, tapped again a little louder, and heard a soft female voice bid him enter.

"Venus! I thank thee," he exclaimed; "I am right after all," and then he opened the door. It was with much pleasure that he saw two pretty-looking girls seated there, without any one else with them, and for the moment, entering from a dark passage into a light room, his vision was not quite so clear as to enable him to distinguish objects correctly; he made a profound salutation, and advancing, exclaimed—

"I have the enviable felicity of addressing the idol of human eyes, the beautiful Violet Evesham."

"That, indeed, you have not," cried one of the damsels, with a merry laugh.

He opened his eyes widely, instantly, and found it was as she said; but that if disappointed in meeting one expected fair one, he had the satisfaction of encountering another unexpected.

"I perceive my mistake," he instantly rejoined, and looking again upon the damsel, he found her to possess a very pretty face, with dark eyes that laughed as merrily and as wickedly as her lips could. He was rather struck with her appearance, and resolved to take advantage of his good fortune in being thus thrown in her company. "Yes, my charming stranger," he added, I see thou art not the lady of whom I was in quest; but your dazzling beauty bursting suddenly upon me, blinded my vision and caused the mistake."

"I am much afraid you must be troubled with weak eyes, fair sir," replied the damsel, not at all disconcerted by his sudden appearance, his dress, or his address.

"Why, sweet one?" he asked.

"Because, in the first place, you mistake me for another; and secondly, declare it is my beauty which caused it: you could not have looked at my face," she replied, turning it away, with an affectation of bashfulness.

"Perdie! but it is as much as a man's heart is worth to attempt it," he exclaimed, gently taking her hand, which she did not offer to withdraw; "it reminds me of the heathen fable of the god Jupiter, who, by appearing in the full blaze of his glory to a ladye of his love, at her desire, caused her destruction; inasmuch as the dazzling brilliancy of his appearance, and the splendour of his beauty, were more than mortal could look on and live. In this case the facts are reversed; thou'rt the goddess, and I the mortal. But though my destruction ensue, I will look on thy sweet face; I will at least have the gratification of knowing, if I die, that I did see thy beauty, that my senses drank deeply of the intense delight: nay, my sweet one, never keep thy face turned so long from me—vouchsafe me one look!"

"It were not wise in me to comply with thy wish," replied the maiden, stealing a glance from the very corner of her eyelid at the stranger, with whose face and attire, upon inspection, she was not at all dissatisfied; "your good opinion might be worth having; it would be imprudent in me to dispel the charm; therefore, I shall persist in keeping my homely countenance hidden, which, unseen, may preserve a respectable and praiseful character; but beheld, would make its good name vanish in the instant."

"Certes, thou most charming of charmers! thou dost affect too much humility," ejaculated the stranger, passing his arm round her slender waist, to which she made but a faint resistance; "thy gentleness would prevent thy wishing my despairing death; and if thou dost persist in thy cruelty, I shall be enforced to suspend myself from the bough of a tree—"

"Like a withered apple, blighted ere it reached its day of ripeness; an example to all others of the same species not to trust all to the kindness of the sun," cried the young damsel, who had not yet spoken, with a laugh.

"Even as thou sayest, my witty and pretty maiden," responded the gallant, joining in her laugh; "I can see that thou hast much kindness in thy composition wilt thou not lend me thine aid to induce this damsel to forego her cruel determination?"

"Oh no, I cannot promise anything; I must have nothing to do with you," she replied.

"And why not, my rosebud?"

"Because you are a gallant, and my father is constantly lecturing my sister and I to be aware of and avoid ye, for ye are, as he says, a terrible and frightful set."

"And do you believe him? thou ravisher of one's senses!"

"I hardly know. I don't see anything very frightful in ye, and I dare say ye are not so terrible that I need be afraid of your biting."

"No, thou heart's-ease! we never bite—we kiss instead. There is nothing terrible in that, is there?—thou *parterre* of charms!"

"That is a question with which the tongue has nought to do," observed the damsel he still held in his arms, and who, perhaps, fearful his attention might be too much attracted by her sister, being very pretty and sprightly, forgot her intention of keeping her face turned away, presented it full front to him, and looked up in his, with a glance which made him impulsively press her hand, and draw her still closer to him.

"By the immensity and endurance of my love!" he ejaculated, "thou'rt right, thou exceller of Venus!—it is a question which should be put by lips, and answered by them only. Let mine put the question to thine at once," he added, making an attempt to kiss the maiden, which she struggled to prevent, and cried out,—

"No! no! mine cannot speak yet."

"Then they must be taught their letters," replied the gallant. "There are twenty-six in the alphabet—thou shalt learn them. Thou wilt find my lips a wonderous pleasant horn-book; thus does it commence:—A stands for *Amor*, which in Latin signifies love; for *Amour*, which in French has the same meaning; in English, for Amaranth, for that is a flower that never fades. So much for A." And he gave her a kiss before she expected it. She tried again to disengage herself, but he held her fast, and continued,—"B, the second letter, stands for *Benignus*, Latin, meaning kind; *Baiser*, French, meaning to kiss; and in English, Beatific, for kissing *is* celestial enjoyment;" so saying, he imprinted a second hasty kiss upon the maiden's lips.

"Do you find the lessons pleasant, Lucy?" inquired her sister, archly.

"Whatever is compulsory is seldom very pleasant, Cissy," she replied.

"It is but fair I should give you a lesson, too, sweet Cissy," cried the gallant; "and i' faith, your sister will scarce quarrel with my proceeding two letters with you. You shall have the alphabet between you—or for that matter, a separate alphabet each. My horn-book is very prolific."

"I beg to decline—I have no wish to learn," exclaimed Cecilia, with a look at him which fully told him she was not exactly telling him the truth.

"Nay, but thou shalt!" he cried, "it's a pity thou should'st remain uninstructed in so important a matter."

"No, no!" cried Cecilia, with a laugh, retreating

as he advanced, and commencing a chase round the room, closely followed by the gallant; she dodged him here and there, vowing she would not be kissed, and in the struggle the chairs and tables were noisily moved about.

"Hush!" cried Lucy, "don't make such a noise; father will hear you, and if he comes up there will be a pretty to do.

"I don't care!" replied Cecilia; "I won't be kissed."

"You?" echoed the gallant; "my ruby-mouthed Cissy, it is thy lips, not thee, I shall kiss. Aha! I have you fast; now I prithee hold thee still and

incline thine ear to what I shall reveal; thou'st no fear, thou hast said, that I shall bite, and if thou'rt quiet and passive as becomes thee, thou wilt find me a very gentle tutor; now for the next letter, which is C, which stands for *Cœlestis*, Latin, meaning heavenly, *Cœur*, French, meaning the heart, and in English for Cissy, and more I need not say." No more he *said*, but he kissed her, and to do her justice she took it very quietly. He had, however, scarcely pressed his lips to her's when the door suddenly flew open, and the host, with a face more fiery than the setting sun in a mist, staggered in; both girls screamed out with fright, and both exclaimed with one accord,—

"Heaven have mercy on us, here's father!"

While he roared out as lustily as rage and intoxication would permit,—

"But I have something to say, you flaunting, bedizened knave you; I have to say that my hic—that my daughter's lips are not Ma—hic—ma—hic—'msey—"

"No! something more intensely exquisite than nectar," coolly uttered the gallant, not exhibiting how disconcerted he really felt.

"C stands for Cissy, does it?" cried the host, mimicking the soft voice of the gallant, "and so it does for co—co—hic—coxcomb, and for charlatan; and so it does for this, a crabtree—cudgel," he added, flourishing one not unlike a bludgeon in calibre, and at the same time making towards our gallant, who turned pale, but flinched not, and said quietly,—

"I would advise thee not to touch me with that weapon—it may cost thee dear."

"May it?" roared the host; "I can afford to pay the expense, and I'll try it;" as he uttered the words he made a blow at him, which missed its destination, and staggering forward with the force of it, he fell heavily under a table, from which unfortunate position he could not, with all his efforts, emancipate himself.

"Fly—fly, for Heaven's sake!" urged the girls to the gallant, beseechingly.

"If you wish it, I will; else I move not for all the fathers in Christendom," he returned.

"Won't you?" shouted the host, struggling to rise; "won't you? stay till I get up—hic—only stay, and by the staff of St. Peter! I'll make your bedizened worship dance to the music of my cudgel."

"Oh, pray leave us!" cried Lucy and Cecilia together.

"Shall I ever see you again, delights of existence?" he asked.

"Oh yes," they both responded; "only go now."

"As you will, angelics; your wish shall be gratified, I am gone—farewell!" he squeezed their hands tenderly, kissed them both, and coolly sauntered out of the room, overhearing the host exclaim—

"Shameless baggages! before my very fa—fa—hic—face too! audacious jezebels! you're always after cotehardies and capuchons, ye are, but—I'll—hic—I'll cure you of your wickedness, I will; I'll send you both to the nunnery of St. Ursula, and I—hic—I warrant me you won't see any flaunting, graceless, fantastic varlets to outswear the devil, and lie with less conscience, there—no, no, there you shall go, you'll be safe there—hic—ha, ha!—close enough there."

"I won't go," exclaimed Cecilia.

"Nor I," ejaculated Lucy; "we are kept close enough here—a great deal too close: if you was not to keep us shut up night and day as you do, we should not want so much to see the gallants—should we, Cissy?"

"No," replied Cecilia; "I dare say mother's father never kept her so locked up as we are; and I dare say you was glad enough to steal into her room, and I dare say she was glad enough to see you, and kiss you too for that matter; and I dare say you'd have thought it very hard if her father had come in with a stick and beat you away when you was kissing, which I daresay you found wondrous pleasant and nice; which it is, for I'm sure nobody can deny that, can they, Lucy?"

Lucy's reply was drowned in a volley of fiery exclamations from the drunken host of "Y^e^ Sunne," and the gallant waited to hear no further, but retracing his steps, endeavoured to find the room in which Violet and Flora were.

"By my faith," he soliloquised, "but that little lesson was refreshing, though the adventure altogether was somewhat fatiguing, for certes! their lips were tender, and they nothing loth; girls of spirit and discernment, both. I shall not forget the fair Lucy and Cissy; they shall not be disappointed, either of them, poor things, but they must wait until my affair with this Violet, the idol of Brenchley, is passed. I have only between this and to-morrow to win and wear her; the time is short, but to your true gallant time is nothing—she is surpassingly beautiful, and she must be mine. Aha, a footstep! who comes here?—perhaps a servant who can initiate me into the mysteries of this infernally dark labyrinth—Ho! who goes there?"

"It is I, Gith," answered the comer; "I couldn't keep the host; you slipped away too soon. He missed you, and swore you had gone to see my young mistress, and was so positive, I was obliged to undeceive him, and tell him the truth."

"Yes, and spoiled the prettiest affair in the world," exclaimed the gallant; "but no matter for that. As I am slightly acquainted with the fair Violet Evesham and her foster-father, I want you to lead me to them, that I may tender my duty and service."

"Her foster-father and uncle are both out; but they will soon return," replied Gith.

"Oh!" ejaculated the gallant, rubbing his hands gleefully together; "but I have not much time to spare, therefore I'll not wait for their return, but see the ladies at once."

"Oh, they'll not be long," returned Gith; "and if you sit in the apartment below, where you had your wine, you'll be sure to see them as they come in. I'm in a hurry now, for I want to get my cudgel from mine host, which he borrowed to line your cote with. Some trim, bescented knave has been kissing his hand, and otherwise making an unmannerly fool of himself to Miss Violet and Miss Flora, while they were looking out of the casement, and by his impertinence compelled them to leave it. I want to watch for him, and if my fopling comes back and does the like again, by the Mass! I'll break his bones or my cudgel in trying it. While I am taking you to them, he may return and be gone before I have time to fall in with him; so you see I've no time to lose, and I know master will soon be here, therefore you'll excuse me, and wait below."

"Hem—a—well—a—" stammered the gallant, rather confusedly. "You have given me a potent reason for deferring my visit; I cannot wait, but will come again to-night perhaps, or else to-morrow," and then added in an undertone, "but I'll come provided, rascal, against contingencies." He then strolled, or rather groped his way down the corridor, descended the stairs, paid his reckoning to a servant at the entry, and sauntered slowly down Chepeside. He had not progressed far, when he perceived a horseman alight, and give his steed in charge of an attendant; he quickened his pace, and on reaching him, accosted him familiarly.

"What, Maltravers? Why, in the name of—"

The person whom he accosted started with great

suddenness, and as he recognised him, interrupted him with a precautionary "hush!" saying in a low tone,—

"Out upon thy dull memory, Leon! hast thou forgotten?"

"Fore Heaven! yes," he replied with a laugh; "a million pardons—I remember now, however. Well, my dear friend, Martin du Bois, where, in the name of the most mysterious enigma, hast thou hidden thyself for this last month? and why dost thou look so woe-begone, so white, and so haggard; beshrew me! the adventure must have been to the full right marvellous to have pulled thee down thus! What hast thou been doing? maid-following, I'll be sworn, and some infernally tough father or tough brother has trounced thee most unmercifully."

"I have had a hard adventure, it is true," replied Martin du Bois, for he it was; "but have neither breath to tell it, nor you patience to hear it. What game hast thou a-foot now, eh?"

"I have started one worthy a gallant; one whose loveliness is transcendent—"

"The old story," interrupted Martin, with a smile.

"In this case not in the least exaggerated. Why, man! she was the beauty of the village, the idol of Brenchley."

"Of where?" almost thundered Martin du Bois.

"Holy St. Mary defend us!" ejaculated the gallant, recoiling. "What ails thee? Dost thou know her, eh?"

"No, no," replied Martin, hurriedly, "I—I did not catch what you said; where didst thou say?"

"Brenchley, I said," replied the gallant; "her name is Violet Evesham. Why, how eagerly thou dost stare at me, Martin! Are thy wits affected, man?"

"Pshaw!" cried Martin, contemptuously affecting an air of indifference. "Well, and where is thy beauty? at Brenchley?"

"No, she is here, staying at 'The Sun,' on her way, with a foster-father and an uncle, to—to—curse me if I can recollect."

"Gloucestershire," suggested Martin.

"St. Peter! yes," replied the gallant. "What made you hit upon it?"

"Mere chance; I named the first county that came into my head,' uttered Martin, with seeming carelessness. "You've had an interview with this damsel? What is her name? Oh, I remember—Violet; and she has promised to meet you, I suppose?"

"Why, I am not exactly so fortunate yet," returned the gallant, arranging his mustachioes; "I merely caught a glimpse of her as I passed, but obtained my information from her servant, who tells me they stay but to-morrow here, and the next day depart for the country; so you see, Mal—I beg pardon—Martin, I have not much time to lose."

"What do you purpose doing?" asked Martin.

"I shall first serenade her to-night, and the devil's in it if I do not, after that, get speech with her, and arrange future matters."

"I will accompany you to-night," said Martin.

"Aha! Martin; what, you think to oust me, eh? and get the maiden for yourself!" exclaimed the gallant. "Well, i' faith you shall come. I fear thee not; she has seen me; I say she has seen me, and I am not afraid of the preference she will show when we get side by side. By the way, she has a pretty damsel with her, who may suit your taste, if you have grace enough to woo her."

"I shall not attempt to step between thee and thy fair one," said Martin; and added, sarcastically, "I should, indeed, be witless to essay for a woman's favour, where the flower of gallants, Leon de la Agnelet, had already made an impression. At what hour do you seek her window, to pour forth your strains of melody?"

"Why, I've a preparation or so to make, and if you will meet me at my house two hours hence, I will be ready for this deed of love and daring," answered Leon.

"I will not fail you, nor detain you longer now," said Martin.

"You are too considerate; good day till then," cried Leon, waving his hand courteously, and sauntering away in the most approved fashion.

"Adieu!" exclaimed Martin, watching him for a moment and muttering, "this is better than I could have hoped; I've tracked them to London, and this fool has played the jackal for me, and unkenneled them; at 'The Sun' they stay, and depart the day after to-morrow—that is information worth having. Let me see; it will be unwise to show myself near there, but to-night I will ascertain all, and if I can persuade this pink of prettiness, Leon, to carry her off to-morrow night by force, for he has plenty of followers to do it, it will be an easy matter to get her from him; and then, my beauteous maiden, we shall see who will play the suppliant. I would to St. Paul I did not feel this passion for her—love it may be; I could make more certain of my revenge, but I feel as if I could not live without her, nor stop at anything to get her; it begets, too, a false tenderness, which may go far to cheat me out of the full measure of my vengeance; but I must steel myself against all such weakness. Ah! fiends of hell! hither come Halbert Evesham and my bitter enemy; if he sees me I'm lost." He slouched his cap over his eyes, and darting suddenly down a narrow turning near him, disappeared, indulging in a hope that he had not been discovered.

At the time appointed he joined Leon de la Agnelet, and, accompanied by two musicians and four stout retainers, they left his mansion and took their way to "The Sun." The night was clear and moonlight, warm and calm—the very night for a love serenade—and Leon felt his spirits rise as he neared the hotel; he was an adept at serenading, having practised frequently, and being possessed of a remarkably sweet tenor voice, was enabled to make his nocturnal music very agreeable, added to which, he was gifted with a 'pretty' person and a very 'handsome' purse, two qualities which, when known, rendered him very successful in his love affairs. Of all the damsels he had beheld and wooed, and wooing won, none had to his idea seemed so beautiful as Violet. Having had an opportunity of gazing upon her face for some little time without being observed, he was able to peruse every feature with the strictest scrutiny, and finished with deciding upon its being the loveliest his eyes ever lighted upon, feeling at the same time a greater desire than he ever had before experienced, that the possessor of such sweet beauty should be his. The more his imagination feasted upon her charms, the greater became his coveting, and before he had reached "The Sun," he hesitated not to acquaint Martin that he would make her his at any sacrifice. This was the frame of mind which Martin wished him to be in, and he artfully suggested everything which could still further inflame his desire to possess her; he was quite satisfied the serenade would be attended with no interview, and he wished to keep Leon in such a fever of anticipation, that he would readily fall into the idea of carrying her off—an act constantly done in the city, and from the scantiness of the watch very easy of accomplishment. He took good care, however,

not to mention it, until Leon, enraged by ill success, was prepared to receive and act upon any hint of the nature.

"The Sun," or as the signboard had it, "YE SUNNE," stood at the corner of a street whose name has passed away; and the window from which Violet and Flora had gazed fronted the street, although so near the corner as to enable them to see every one passing and repassing along Cheapside; this street, however, at the hour when Leon and Martin reached it, was deserted by the wayfarers; not a soul appeared in sight—not even one of the watch, parading lazily to and fro with their long partisans carelessly shouldered. Lights had disappeared from every window, and everything around was still and hushed in repose, save the serenaders, who had taken the precaution to wear masks upon their visages, in order to prevent their being recognised in case of disturbance. They took up their abode beneath the window, and the musicians, each bearing a small harp, prepared, when Leon commenced singing, to accompany him; he cleared his throat, and in a soft musical voice sang, not exactly the same words, but bearing the same meaning, as the following:—

SERENADE.

To a land where sunbeams never die,
And flowers never fade,
Where every glance of thy blue eye,
Shall meet some faery glade;
Where rarest birds gem every tree,
And in the sweetest tone
Give utterance to a melody
Thine ear hath never known—
Wilt thou with me?

There's not a bud that ever blew,
Or flower dwelling there,
That ever bore a form or hue,
Less bright than thou art fair.
A gentle wind with fragrant breath,
Makes smile each spark'ling stream;
In this fair land we know no death,
Our change is one bright dream—
Wilt thou with me?

Ah! say not nay, and thou shalt dwell
Where grief hath never been;
Where many a fainting asphodel
Is decking earth's pale green:
Where all fair plants with dew impearl'd,
Whose beauties may not flee,
The glory of a brighter world
Shall bloom alone for thee—
Wilt thou with me?

Between the first and second verse of the song Leon paused, for some indication that he was heard by her for whom this music was made, but received no token whatever; and then proceeding, sung the second verse, which being concluded, he made a second pause; but still he heard not the unlatching of a casement, or saw any one, albeit he watched earnestly any appearance of a fair face peeping, curious to learn who thus "discoursed most eloquent music." He felt a little discouraged, but exerting all his vocal abilities to the utmost stretch of their sweetness and softness, he commenced and concluded the third verse, repeating the question at the end of the ditty in the most insinuating bland tone he could assume; but a dead silence ensued, and Martin whispered to him,—

"Perdie! Leon, these dullards have no soul for music, or else thy strains are wasted upon their sleeping ears. By St. Cecilia! their drowsiness must be heavy indeed, to cling to them after such sweet sounds. 'Twould be as well if thy musicians played a measure or two to draw attention, if not yet aroused, and then thou canst repeat the last lines of thy ditty, which seem to me to contain as much matter for your purpose as though you sang it all."

"It is a discouraging fact for us gallants," returned Leon, in an under tone, "that in our gallantries with these city people, we are obliged to penetrate through a thick coat of dullness before we can come to the understanding. Wit with them is but the cunning of trade. When any of these people set their wits to work, it is for some infernal business speculation: their brightest flashes of wit are but deceitful rumours for raising or depressing the value of coin for their own emolument; and their soul for music lies in the chinking of golden pieces. This grovelling spirit seems hereditary, for females of the family are affected with it to a certain degree; and it is amazing, no less than outrageously fatiguing, to see how much mire you must wade through before you can touch their hearts. As thou mayest perceive, Martin, in this case—for thou knowest, had I been west of this place of money worshippers, I had not been necessitated to repeat my lay. Thy advice touches me as being pertinent, and I will follow it. Ho, fellows," he added, addressing the musicians, "play me a gentle, soul-dissolving melody, with thy best skill, which, when thou hast concluded, I will again essay the latter part of the song I sang but now."

The musicians obeyed him, and played, with considerable taste and ability, a very moving air, "sweet, sad, and complaining," as Leon characterized it, which, when finished, had failed in drawing any acknowledgment from the inmates of "the Sun." It was therefore with a feeling having but little parity with the sentiment of the song, that Leon commenced "Ah, say not nay," and proceeded until he reached "the glory of a brighter world," when two casements suddenly opened, and from one he received upon his head a small parcel, which struck him with extraordinary force, so as to make him grind his teeth very hard, and utter an anathema; and from the other a bouquet of flowers, which also alighted upon his head, —a kind of practical metaphor, that if one created a wound, there was a balm bestowed to heal it with. He stooped quickly and picked up both, rubbing the sore spot, where quite a bump was raised, with little romance but much feeling in his manner, and at once opening the parcel he found a quantity of pennies, which he flung into the road, to be as instantly picked up by one of his retainers. The bouquet he kissed, and motioning to his musicians to proceed, concluded his ditty, repeating "Wilt thou with me?" three or four times in the most appealing manner. He had reached "wilt thou" for the fifth time, when he was saluted by a terribly hard knock upon his shoulders from a cudgel, well delivered by a strong hand, and had it repeated several times most vigorously before he could escape from it, and heard the host's voice, excited to a passionate degree of fury, roar,—

"Go with thee, thou mumming knave? No! take that, thou trim princox, thou lozel lordling, thou craven coystril, thou screaming coxcomb, thou squalling invader of honest men's rest! take that, varlet—would none but my chickens serve thy foul appetite? take—"

The host himself was here taken unexpectedly by receiving on his head a tremendous whack from a stout staff of one of the retainers with such force that it filled the street with its sound, and felled the little

man to the earth; in another minute he was bound and gagged; it was with some difficulty Martin could withhold Leon from pinking him with his rapier; he fumed and raged to such a degree at the blows he had received, his bones ached and smarted at the discipline the host had bestowed, and his pride had received such a humiliating indignity at the hands of a common tapster, that he fairly danced with excess of fury. Martin, to divert his attention, said to him in a hurried tone,—

"Heed him not, he is safe enough in your people's hands; my life on't he has left his door upon the latch, and we can make an unopposed entry into the house; the donor of that bouquet will doubtless be on the alert, and a few minutes will suffice for you to interchange your sentiments. Come, man, think no more of the drunken dog, let us try his guests. Follow me; not a moment is to be lost if you wish to take advantage of the opportunity now in your hands! come on, a thousand merks to a crockard the maiden awaits thee."

"The scroyle skinker," roared the gallant, "the scall, the lob, the aglet baby, the lifter, the hunt-counter, the jack-a-sauce, the hilding, the fustilarian, the lozel—the—the—" He paused for breath, and for a name; Martin dragged him away.

"Waste not thy words on such argil," he cried; "but enter the house with me, or you'll lose the best piece of fortune Venus ever bestowed; come on, man, if thou carest for the maiden."

"To be beaten by such a swilling tub! such a knave of dregs!" cried the gallant, still chafing excessively.

"Why, and thou would'st prefer his society, keep it," said Martin, losing his hold of Leon; "for my part I shall into the dwelling, and if fate throws the maiden in my path, I will not fail to improve the chance you care not to seize."

"No, no," replied Leon, brought a little to his recollection by Martin's words; "I am with you, but to be cudgelled by such a dog! such an ale—"

"Hush," whispered Martin; "make no noise, it is as I suspected, the door is open. Then he muttered to himself, "Now the devil befriend me. If I cross this Ethelbert, which I trust I shall, I'll bury my knife to the hilt in his accursed ribs, again and again, until my revenge is glutted—glutted."

"What do you say?" whispered the gallant; "I can't hear you—how infernally dark it is;" this was said after the entry had been gained, and they were passing into the apartment where Leon had had the Malmsey; Martin replied in the same tone—

"Lead on, you know the way; where are the stairs situate?"

"Curse me if I remember—oh stay, its in one of the corners, we shall find it soon if we go into all of them, for there's not many. Damn the settle! I've broken my shins, ho! how cursedly I have hurt myself."

"Hush!" exclaimed Martin in a low tone, groping his way about, quite as anxious to find the stairs as Leon could be; "you will disturb some of the people whom it would be better were sleeping, if you are not more cautious." When he had concluded, he remained silent, while Leon kept drawing in his breath in a sibillating manner, and then ejaculating, "Oh!" accompanied by mutterings plainly expressive of the pain he was suffering. Martin stood still for a minute, thinking by becoming a little familiar with the darkness that he should be able slightly to distinguish objects. As he put his intention into practice, and peered intently into the darkness, he became aware of a pair of eyes glaring brightly upon him; he doubted his vision for a moment, and hastily closed his own for an instant; he opened them again, and there still beheld the eyes; he felt a sensation of awe and horror creep over him—he grew cold, and his heart palpitated audibly: visions of spectres crowded into his brain again; he became aware that he should again become the victim of his superstitious fears, unless he at once made a strong effort and surmounted them; he therefore strove to shake them off, rubbed his eyes to see that he was not deceived, and advanced towards it; he had but taken the first step, when a voice, which, to his excessive horror, he recognised instantly to be Ethelbert Evesham's, exclaimed sternly,—

"Who are ye, who steal thus in the dark into the dwellings of peaceful citizens?"

"Wh—wh—wh—who's that?" exclaimed Leon, so immensely startled, that he bounded back and upset a table containing several drinking vessels, which in its descent created considerable uproar; at the same moment, one of his retainers thrust his head in at the entry, and called out loudly,—

"Honoured master, the watch are coming! Quick! away with you, or you will be taken—they are making their round, and there are at least twenty of them."

Martin and the gallant in an instant made for the door, closely followed by Ethelbert, who, however, stumbled over the settle which had grazed the shins of Leon, and fell; they gained the outside; the host was caught up in the arms of two of the retainers, struggling and kicking most vigorously, and was borne to his door; in his struggles he succeeded in getting to the ground, and freeing his mouth, and, in a voice which he employed lustily, andwhich, in the silence of the night, sounded startingly loud and clear, he bellowed out—

"Ho, there! Watch! watch! Lifters are abroad!" A broad hand was suddenly thrust over his mouth, he was lifted up again, thrown violently into the entry, the door was closed upon him, and in another minute, the serenaders disappeared. The watch, hearing the host's voice, made for the spot hastily, but found the place deserted. As there must, however, have been cause for the outcry, they searched closely, and knocked at several houses, among others, at "the Sun;" they,were admitted by Ethelbert; a few words explained the matter, and they hastily departed in search of the offenders. They scoured a few streets, but without success; and as these affairs were not of uncommon occurrence, and not much import was attached to them, they gave up their search and continued their rounds.

In their progress to the mansion of Leon de la Agnelet, Martin cursed himself several times for not carrying out his revenge upon Ethelbert; he fancied the opportunity would have served admirably, had not the sudden shock to his nerves, at finding himself so unexpectedly in his presence, overpowered him, and prevented his taking advantage of it; he, however, consoled himself in the hope that the next night would afford him an opportunity, and he resolved then to take it, come what might. When they reached the abode of Leon, the musicians and the retainers were dismissed, and the two friends seated themselves over a flagon of choice wine in a small apartment—a sort of boudoir, to talk over the night's adventure.

"By the Mass!" exclaimed Leon, after emptying a cup of wine, "but that shred of a villain—that small lump of roguery and extortion—that assinego in a small compass—that sotting, swindling, drunken caitiff—that waste-butt—that vile skinker, hath made my bones sore with his infernal cudgel; they smart as if seared with hot iron; they are so tender, I can

scarce, without crying out, bear my habiliments to touch them. By Heaven! I had been guilty of his death hadst thou not stayed me, Martin, which forsooth I am right glad thou didst, for I would not have had my sword stained with the rank blood of so vile a dog. But, thanks to my good fortune, I know a way to be revenged of him, and, *par Dieu*! I will. I'll make the tun-bellied rat gnaw his fingers to the bone, and dance with mad insanity to the ebullitions of his own dire rage. I have a way, a good way, a pleasant way to do this, and i' faith I will, or my name is not Leon de la Agnelet."

"And what is the way?" asked Martin.

"He has two daughters," replied Leon, significantly; "I have seen them both, though he keeps them as he would his filthy coin—in a cursed chest of a looking place, which horrifies one to remember. I have seen both, as I tell you, and I flatter myself the impression I have made upon their young and susceptible hearts is not easily to be effaced either by tyrant parent or rigorous custom. I'faith, Maltravers—I beg pardon, Du Bois—they have marvellously pretty faces and divine lips—truly divine lips."

"You have tasted them?" asked Martin, with a laugh.

"By my troth, have I! Perdie! I would that there was a wine that smacked of the flavour."

"If there were," exclaimed Martin, "I suspect you would be addicted to drinking."

"Most indubitably. I should be incontinently a drunkard; I should drink myself to death, I much fear. By the loveliest of goddesses! the mother of love, Venus! I swear, of all pastimes, kissing hath with me immeasurably the preference, and with all persons whose hearts are not formed of some cursed hard stuff, harder than adamant. I have met with persons who have thought the kiss of a cup worth more than a ripe fresh lip of a young maiden. Perdie! What sots! I have, i' faith, too, heard some women say they thought kissing 'insipid work,' but then I have either not believed them, or deemed them utterly soulless. What say you, Martin?"

"As all true men would say, I expect on that point, that the kiss of a maiden's lip—where she kisses too, for much depends on that—is more sweet and delightful than aught else in the world beside."

"True; and he who cannot see the full force of that, I pity most exceedingly. I deem it one of the boons God gave us to compensate for the many ills we endure, and just to give us an idea of what Paradise was, and what Heaven is. Nothing would lead me along the paths of virtue more strongly or more surely than kissing; to be denied that blissful celestial enjoyment for evil doing, would render me a pink of virtuous beings."

"You take a singular view of the matter," replied Martin, with a smile; "but, to change the subject, pray what were those donations which were thrown to you from the casements above you? One you hurled into the street, which one of your fellows caught up, and the other, with a kiss, you consigned to repose in the breast of your cotehardie."

"One, good Martin, was a packet of money, thrown by some ass, who deemed me a street mummer, I presume, and which has raised a villanous bump upon my temple, and the other by the discriminating Violet, which was a bouquet of flowers." Here he produced the nosegay and handed it to Martin, who, inspecting it with much eagerness, believing it to have come from Violet, little as he expected such an occurrence, suddenly exclaimed,—

"Aha! what have we here? As I live, some lines upon a strip of parchment!"

"Lines! give them to me, Martin," cried Leon, with avidity. "Ha, ha! why this looks well; what is this—very pretty, by my honour! Listen, Martin,—

> "He who once has come, may come again,
> If that his inclining finds no pain—
> Be bold, and brave, but cautious still,
> And find that bolts can't bar the will.
> To-morrow eve be here at nine,
> An' thou'dst meet one who *may* be thine."

"What sayeth the signature?" asked Martin.

"There is none," replied Leon.

"Will you allow me to look at it?" inquired Martin.

"Oh, by all means! It is but doggrel, it is true, but in such a case as this it becomes ravishing poetry," returned Leon.

"It is not Violet's," muttered Martin, perusing it attentively; "she at least is superior to any wretched stuff of this kind." Then raising his voice, he exclaimed, "You will go, of course?"

"Ay, marry, that will I—were I to refuse, I would penance myself to woo a hideous hag of fourscore, kiss her fourteen times within an hour every hour of every day, lavish my choicest sentiments upon her, and be devotedly her's until she died, if she lingered until she were a century and a half. Go! why, Martin, didst thou hope I should say no, that thou might'st thyself accept the invitation?"

"No, forsooth; I merely said as much with the intention of giving you a little advice, which is, to take a sufficient number of people with you that you may carry her off by force, if there should be opposition to your taking her quietly."

"Carry her off by force!" echoed the gallant, doubtfully; "I confess to no intention yet to carry her off at all."

"What! and she so lovely?" exclaimed Martin, counterfeiting surprise; "what art thou thinking about? if thour't a jot indifferent I will take the affair off thy hands, by St. Anthony! But a lovely woman, according to your words, transcendently lovely, is worth getting into one's possession by any means; the more especially where you have so many chances in your favour."

"That is very true," replied Leon, "but consider the fuss and uproar these things make. I like to do things more quietly."

"Well, and so you may in this case," replied Martin; "these lines evidence that the maiden hath conceived an affection for thee; it will take thy silvery tongue but little labour to persuade her to fly with thee."

"Perdie!" exclaimed the gallant, rapturously, "if she consent to that, indeed!"

"Well, suppose she does," continued Martin, "and at the moment you are quitting the house—and mark ye, she is willing to come—there arises some factious opposition on the part of her friends, and you are deprived of her while she is in your grasp, unless a few judicious followers enable you to proceed, by keeping them from molesting you. Were I in your position, I would not hesitate one second with such a beauty in the scale; wishing to have her, I would make sure to have her, as it is now in your power. Less than a score of retainers would be more than sufficient for your purpose."

"But suppose that she did not consent, my people would then be an incumbrance," said Leon.

"But you have no right to suppose she would not consent; if she was really loth, you would not have had the lines; and if she should hang back, why take

her, man, whether she will or no. Your soft persuasions will soon make her rejoice that you thought and acted for her."

"I' faith, its worth the trial," uttered Leon, musingly.

"There are hundreds of gallants who have not half thy renown who would leap at such an opportunity, and would gladly take advantage of such a proposition; particularly, too, as I will accompany you, and lend my best aid to forward your wishes."

"You are very good, Maltravers—I mean Du Bois; but have you not a motive in thus offering to accompany me, beyond the reason you have yet given?"

"None!" exclaimed Martin, rather confused by the question.

"I will wager a thousand merks thou hast, Martin; I can see by thy changing features thou hast; besides, I know thee, Martin, of old—thou wouldst not lend me thine aid unless there was some good reason for it. Come, what is it?—out with it."

"Nay, I have none, surmise what you will," he replied, "beyond the natural feeling of curiosity and desire I may have to see and obtain the female friend you mentioned."

"Ha, ha! I knew I was not deceived—I suspected as much. Well, Martin, I think the hour approaches when rest will be needful—thou canst have a couch here, an' thou likest."

"I accept it," replied Martin.

"And while upon my bed I will reflect upon what thou hast advised."

"Aye! but in thy reflections forget not the 'transcendent loveliness' of her whom thou art cogitating about; let the beauty of her form mix in thy thoughts—and the chances of losing her, too, for want of a little nerve and decision. My life on't, in the morning you will assent to my proposition."

"We shall see, Martin," ejaculated Leon.

"We shall," he replied.

They bade each other good night, were lighted to their respective rooms, and were both soon fast locked in the arms of sleep. The following morning, the previous evening's subject was discussed with the breakfast; and Martin succeeded in persuading Leon that it was the best, and indeed the only thing he could do, to preserve his reputation as the first gallant of the day, to bear away the fair Violet in spite of all opposition. Leon demurred at first rather strongly—he did not like using violence; he preferred making love, and winning the maiden by gentle means, believing, without being far from the truth, that a woman may be led to love, but not compelled. Added to which, if the violence was exercised upon one whose inclinations were obstinately against being carried or taken away, the fatigue would be immense to undermine the prejudice which the shameful act had created, and persuade her into love—more than he was prepared to undergo, and more than he was at first determined to attempt. But Martin put the case in such a favourable light, that he was induced to believe Violet had only to be asked, to consent at once; and whatever opposition took place would arise from those who had, being *only* the dearest friends she possessed, no right whatever to interfere; and if by any unfortunate accident they did, for it was not certain they would know anything of the matter until she was far beyond their reach, if the affair was well managed, a few retainers could bind them without hurting them; fleet horses might be near, and they could whisk away, and no one but the immediate parties concerned be any the wiser.

"Well, agreeing to your view of the matter," exclaimed Leon, after Martin had, with great sophistry, argued the point, and, as the lawyers have it, made apparently a clear case, "I still have a dislike, in case of her withholding her assent to fly with me, to resort to force and compel her."

"Pshaw!" uttered Martin, contemptuously, "you will not marry the girl, I suppose?"

"Most decidedly not."

"Well then, how is her position bettered, if she become your leman by force or consent? She is still a leman, let it be brought how it may."

"But I beg your pardon, there is a vast difference between her being an agreeing party, and compelling her against her will."

"Possibly, were she to persist in her opposition; but if Leon de la Agnelet doubts his powers of persuasion over the simple mind of a village maiden, why, I have no more to say; perhaps I was rather hasty in believing a boast you once made in my hearing, that you could make any woman you chose in love with you."

"No, Martin, you were not," answered Leon, smoothing his mustachioes, and glancing over his person with much complacency; "I flatter myself that the woman does not exist I could not move to love me, an' I had the mind to make her."

"Well then, what difference can it make in your affair with Violet, whether she consents first or last, so that she does consent?" urged Martin; "place her in a situation where her fears are not worked upon, and where she has free power to act as she pleases, I'll wager a round sum she will not hold back. But country girls have fantastical notions, the briars and weeds of custom choking up their inclination—once clear them away, and you can mould them to your will. However, to settle this question at once, I intend to carry off her friend, whom I have never seen, and if you hang back still with regard to Violet, I will take the affair off your hands; when you see her in my possession, willingly, you will curse your indecision, Leon, which robbed you of such a beauty."

This last remark decided the question, for Leon sprung suddenly to his feet, and, striking the table forcibly with his fist, exclaimed, emphatically,—

"She shall be mine, in the teeth of all the opposition in the world!"

"There spoke the first gallant of the day," cried Martin, rising. "That point, then, is settled; and now for our arrangements. Twenty retainers will be sufficient."

"Shall we need so many?" asked Leon.

"Most likely not; but we may, and it will not do for them to be missing at the moment they might be wanted; the watch may come up, and with your number of retainers their interference will go for nothing, because our numbers will overpower them."

"True; but they will afterwards know against whom to seek redress," said Leon.

"But your people must be all disguised; I would not be so mad as to advise you to employ them, if I did not also counsel you to make them adopt a dress in in which they may not be recognised. We will be at the place by nine; they must follow in little parties, meet there, and await our signal to act as we may require them. Four fast horses must be at hand, so that we may place the women upon them, and away to some place you may think fit to name, not likely to be thought of in case of pursuit."

"I have a little place in the forest of Exmoor, in Somersetshire—a frightful lonely place. It was built by my father, but for what purpose I could never understand. It stands on the river Ex, and is such an out-of-the-way den no human being could ever imagine such a place to be in existence. I went there

once, and I did say I would never go there any more; but it will be the finest place for us we could have. They say it's haunted, and when I was there I was but a boy, but I remember there were some unaccountable noises, as well as strange occurrences; but I suppose it was only because I was a boy, and fancied the moment a light was out the devil or some of his numerous relations stepped in; but I have got rid of all such rubbish and stuff now."

"Then you do not believe in the existence of phantoms or spectres?" inquired Martin.

"Ha, ha! not exactly. No, no, it must indeed be something strangely and inexplicably hideous or mysterious to make me believe it supernatural," replied Leon, with a curl of his upper lip, twining his fingers among his long shining locks of hair, and admiring gratifiedly the whiteness of his hand, garnished with many rings.

"In what manner is this place of thine haunted?" asked Martin, a little anxiously.

"Curse me if I can recollect—but that's all absurdity. The place is an infernal long way off; but I have in my stable some cattle quite equal to the distance, were it twice as far; there are many hostels we can bait at on the road—"

"Ay, and be discovered—leave a certain track behind us. No; we must contrive matters better. Let one of your people carry such things as we shall most need on the journey, and at a few retired huts we shall obtain the rest, without leaving the least clue."

"Very good; you understand these little matters right cunningly—I leave them to you; so make whatsoever arrangements with my people you please." upon which he rang a bell, which was answered by the appearance of a servant, to whom he said, "Gualtier, see that such directions as my good friend here, Martin du Bois, may think fit to give to my people, be complied with to the letter."

"Your orders shall be obeyed," replied Gualtier, bowing, and disappearing upon understanding there were no farther commands.

"Well, Martin, I shall down to the Strand: you can see everything is completed by my return, and then i' th afternoon we'll to Fynnesbury fields, where there is to be a full fayre play at a pair of fynly butts, for an arrow with a silver shaft, and the head and feathers of gold; there will be a goodly display of dames, and I trow we may fall in with some pleasant adventure to pass the hours away, until we engage in this adventure for to-night."

"I thank thee, but I will remain within until the time arrives for our visit to the 'Sun;' I have not much care for these sights, and when I have any affair in hand, I do not like to hazard the chance of accomplishing it by mixing in any other business until that is completed. If you purpose going, I merely warn you not to engage in any adventure whatever, but keep yourself clear for the stirring work to-night."

"Oh, I shall go—you can do as you please; never fear for me, I have a method of steering clear of hazards when I please—have no care that I shall be prevented by aught from fulfilling all we have intended for to-night."

"That is sufficient; you know your road to Exmoor well, I suppose?"

"Indeed I do not know a foot of the way; but that same Gualtier, who not a moment since was here, knows every inch; we shall take him with us as a guide."

"That will suffice admirably," returned Martin, with pleasure displayed on his features; "I can see nothing which can now prevent our plot succeeding."

"And you want me no more at present?" interrogated Leon.

"No," replied Martin; "you can depart and make as many conquests as possible until six o'clock; I should wish you to be here by that time."

"I will return at five; we'll order supper to be served early, and then to our affair. I shall now go dress and away. Adieu till five."

"Farewell," replied Martin; and Leon then sauntered listlessly out of the room. "So!" ejaculated Martin, when he was gone, "all goes as I could wish it. Befriend me, Satan! and ere long I shall have worked out my revenge to the full. Now to my task; there shall not a point escape me which can ensure the accomplishment of my design. Fortune has highly favoured me by throwing this popinjay Leon in my path, and I'll use him until my end is served to the very utmost. It will be easy to get Violet from him—for mine she shall be, and by force, too—for she shall not have the merit of consenting to what she cannot avoid." He fell into a deep fit of musing after this, but as the subjects upon which he mused diverged into some speculations about the other world, in no degree pleasant or comfortable, he roused himself from the fit and rang the bell. The same servant appeared to answer it; Martin scrutinised him for a moment, and then said—

"Your name is Gualtier, is it not?"

"It is," replied the man.

"Has my friend Leon left the mansion yet?"

"He has, a quarter of an hour since?"

"Are you a Frenchman?"

"I am a Norman."

"What is your station in this mansion?"

"I am private servant to the Chevalier Leon de Lisle Agnelet."

"You have some influence over the people, I presume?"

"I have; though not the seneschal, I have as much power."

"And I see by your visage are very discriminating and judicious."

The man bowed. Martin continued—

"You would, not, I presume, were you to receive a handsome douceur, object to any service your master might think fit to employ you upon, or remember anything respecting it, were you asked by strangers?"

"To what extent might be the service to which you allude?"

"A piece of gallantry, merely."

"Carrying off a maiden?"

"Something of that sort. A case in which the maiden consents, but her friends are not so generous, and their interference must be prevented."

"I understand you. My eyes, my tongue, and my hands are my master's, to do as he thinks proper with."

"And your memory?"

"That is hardly my own property, and might find a way to creep out of my mouth, unless something weighty was put on it to keep it close."

"Which it shall have, to such an amount that it will be unable to open. I should suppose that twenty retainers could be picked out from among your people, who might be induced to think as you do, with a proper persuasion?"

"I can pick you twenty men, who hold blood of less value than water, and who never think or remember, but as they're bid."

"That sounds well; I must have men who have no hearts but their money pouches."

"These fellows have no hearts at all."

"They will do; the very people I desire. You

will lead them, and follow my instructions as closely as possible."

"As you can wish."

accompany your master and I to the Sun, in Chepeside; but you must divide yourselves into small parties, and proceed by different routes to the place

"Let these fellows, with yourself, be so completely disguised, that none, not even your own friends, can know you; and be prepared by half-past eight to

so as to avoid suspicion. Be not there before nine, but not a minute later; have four of the stoutest steeds in the stable saddled, and lead them to within

a hundred yards of the place, ready to start the moment they receive their burdens—we may away at once; you must be on the alert to join us upon one of the steeds, for you are to be our guide to the forest of Exmoor."

"Exmoor!" repeated Gaultier, in astonishment, "does my master intend going to that desolate place?"

"He does, for it is the most secret and safest from pursuit; and he tells me you know the way to it well."

"I do; for I was brought up in the lonely house, and have been between here and there at least a hundred times; it is a very, very dull place, and grievously infested with ghosts."

"Is there any one living there?" asked Martin.

"Oh yes, a young woodman and his wife, who keep the place in repair, and are allowed to live in it without paying rent."

"Do the spirits terrify them much?"

"No, they are used to them, and never heed them. But what duty are the retainers to perform? Are they to accompany us to Exmoor?"

"No; their duty will be, in case of a disturbance, to keep back the watch; and if the uncle or foster-father interfere, to silence them effectually—you understand?"

"The knife, eh?"

"You are as discerning as I expected. Let them strike deep and spare not—it will save fear of pursuit; besides, I owe one of them a piece of revenge, and the man who rids me of him may claim a hundred or two hundred merks of me."

"Which one is it?" asked Gualtier, eagerly.

"The uncle: his name is Ethelbert. Should you hear any one addressed by the name, you will know who to single out; and let him who slays him shout in his ear, as he buries his knife in him, 'This comes from Martin du Bois!' Will you do it? and three hundred shall be thine."

"I will see that it is done, if that will suit you."

"Anything that produces his death will suit me. You understand all that is necessary now, I think."

"I do; and you shall not have to complain of the manner in which my task is performed."

"Nor you of my liberality, if you succeed. You can leave me now, and prepare for what you have to do."

The man made his obeisance and retired, while Martin returned to his couch to sleep; for when night came he scarce dared close his eyes, for fear of the horrid dreams which constantly haunted and disturbed his rest; he was therefore obliged to seek in the day the refreshment and repose which in the still dark hour of the night was denied to him.

At a little after five, Leon de la Agnelet returned in a state of excitement and confusion of dress. Martin had not long quitted his couch for the closet where they had breakfasted, when he entered; his face was begrimed, his dress soiled, and his whole appearance that of one who had suffered considerable mauling. Martin rose on seeing him, and could scarce refrain from indulging in a loud laugh at the woful pickle in which he appeared.

"Why, how now, Leon?" he inquired, "what's the meaning of thy disordered dress?"

"I'faith," cried Leon, with much fury, "the result of a million of insults; but they shall be repaid, they shall, to the utmost. I am very glad thou didst persuade me to carry off the girl by force to-night; and I will, though Edward and his whole army stood up to oppose me."

"Ha! what has happened?" asked Martin, eagerly.

"I went, as I purposed, to Fynnesbury this afternoon, to the Archery, and while strolling here and there, I encountered the fair Violet and her friends; the servant man, Gith, was with them. I looked at the pretty Violet for some token of recognition, which, of course, after receiving those lines, I had a right to expect; but she turned her eyes away, and took no notice of me whatever. I fancied, to be sure, that she had not seen me; for it was not likely, you know, Martin, that she, or any one *could* see me and not notice me."

"Undoubtedly," exclaimed Martin.

"Well, I kissed my hand to her, but still she deigned not to look at me. I still imagined she did not see me, and repeated the salute. At this moment I heard one of the elderly men who was with her—a stern-looking individual, with a fierce frown on his brow, and eyes which looked unnatural, bright and piercing—exclaim, 'Violet, what popinjay is that who is kissing his hand to thee?' To which she replied—mark her reply—she who sent the lines to me—'I know him not; it is that very strange-looking person who behaved in the same foolish manner last night.' Mark—a strange-looking person!—I a strange-looking person! I felt my blood rush into my forehead and face—I felt actually red-hot; for some low people near, having heard the question and reply, laughed rudely and disgustingly in my face: I stood confused, not having expected such cool perfidy from one so fair. She looked, Martin, more beautiful than ever. The next instant the villain Gith walked coolly up to me, and thrusting his coarse greasy features close to mine, said,—'Had I known last eve that *thou* wert the impudent fool who caused my young ladies to retire from the window, 'stead of drinking thy Malmsey I would have cudgelled thee, thou ape, until thou hadst skipped out of thy skin; an' if thou dost not move from this spot at once, and cease to insult them by staring with thy hurtleberry eyes so insolently and immodestly, I will cudgel thee now.' Without deigning him a word in reply, I hurled the wretch from me, but not so far as I could have wished, and he returned at me like a mad dog; he beat me with his cursed bludgeon most unmercifully; he threw me down, he rolled me over and over; he dragged me up and knocked me down again, then drew me through the mire, belabouring me most infernally all the while; twisted me about, shook me to death, besmeared and bedraggled me with mire, amid shouts of laughter from the vulgar brutes around, until he grew tired, and then he quitted his hold."

"And what did you?" inquired Martin.

"I drew my rapier, intending to run him through the body; I made a thrust at him, and though I missed his body, I succeeded in putting my weapon up to the hilt through his arm. A great uproar ensued; a dozen clubs and swords were drawn upon me; I battled them as well as I could, and did not budge from the ruffians an inch. But some friends of mine seeing the clamour, and finding me thus surrounded, came to my assistance, dragged me away, put me upon a horse, and here I am; and in a pretty plight too, eh?"

"It would have been better hadst thou followed my advice, and stayed here until the time came for us to depart on our expedition."

"Who could have foreseen such a cursed accident?"

"Were accidents foreseen, they would seldom or never take place. The best thing thou canst do is to doff thy soiled garments and cleanse thy skin—an ablution will refresh thee."

"Every bone in my body is so cursedly sore I can

scarcely move, the villain thrashed me so monstrously; and *she*, too, to cause it all! I'll have no mercy on her when she is in my power, I swear."

"She does not deserve it."

"And she shall not have it. I a strange-looking person! Very well. She shall wish she never uttered so false an epithet. Why, strangle me a thousand of the most brilliant gallants a-day for a year, and you shall still have the most superlative left if you leave me untouched; and to don me a strange-looking person! Ho! ho!"

"Nay, never heed it," interrupted Martin; "you will soon have a full power of retaliation. Change thy garments—make a hearty meal—prime thyself with some choice Rhenish, and then hey for Exmoor!"

"Why, curse me! now I think of it, Martin," exclaimed Leon, as if a sudden idea had struck him, "a girl so dull of perception is scarce worth the carrying off. I should'nt wonder if, after the immense trouble of flying off with her, she did not turn out barbarously insensible of my merits."

"Tush!" interrupted Martin, hastily, and rather anxiously; "I tell you—"

"Nay, nay, hear me out," interposed Leon; "I see you are bent upon going, and I am sure you have some motive considerably stronger for this affair taking place than the one you have assigned—"

"No; I have—"

"Now pray don't interrupt me, Maltra—I mean Du Bois; I am sure you have: but the fatigue would be too great to attempt to unravel it, or I would find it out; but as it is, I don't care one small flagon of the wretchedest wine of the most miserable hostel, what it may be. All I have to say is this, that in the event of running away with Violet, jolting myself to death for a week to get down to the old den, immuring myself alive for Heaven knows how long, compelled to appear despairing, if she prove wayward, for some second eternity; in fact, after performing Herculean labours, should she prove immensely inanimate—a clod with an exquisite form, a grace enveloped in stupidity, dull, and lack perception of one's qualities—why I shall never forgive myself for such an useless expenditure of complaisance, of breath, of time. Judging by her remark of this afternoon, she bids fair to be rich in these dreadful anti-accomplishments, and therefore it appears to me that it would be the wiser plan to forego my intention, trouble myself no farther, and seek a new adventure possessing less trouble, and holding forth a better prospect of reward. Now you may say what you have to advance; I will listen to thee, and then I will either, moved by the force of your arguments, still determine to prosecute the affair, or if you fail to convince me of the impotency of my own reasoning, I shall give it up; but in either case I shall waste little time in ridding myself of the filth that encrusts me. By-the-bye, you may as well accompany me to my attiring room, and while I am changing from a chrysalis to a butterfly, we will discuss the matter. This way."

Martin followed him to his dressing-room, and while he was removing, as well as he could, aided by his servant Gualtier, all traces of Gith's punishment, Martin strenuously endeavoured to keep him in his original determination to carry off Violet.

"You need not fear that she will prove dull or imperceipient," he urged. "I can absolve your mind from that."

"You!" cried Leon, with astonishment; "you! how can you do that?—you have never seen her. How should you know?"

"No, no; I mean—that is—I judge from the description you gave," replied Martin, confusedly.

"Well, and I judge differently, that have seen her. She who could have called me a strange-looking person—be she ever so lovely—must be wanting as much in discernment as she possesses in beauty," returned Leon, with an expression and tone which seemed to say, "answer that if you can."

"You still harp upon that expression," exclaimed Martin. "You are not sure that she really meant it."

"Really!" echoed Leon; "what do you mean?"

"Why, the attention of her friends being suddenly drawn to you by your own actions, and she questioned respecting you, she was, of course, obliged to say something—anything to disarm suspicion that she had in any degree an inclining for you; consequently, she gave utterance to the expression which has so displeased you. I imagine continued success in affairs of gallantry has rendered your wits somewhat duller than they were when you first commenced your career against women's hearts, or you would have understood this in an instant—have forborne to repeat your salute, and avoided the unpleasant consequences which followed."

"It all sounds very well, Martin," replied Leon; "but though it might have been politic to have used such a disparaging term, why needed she look so very grave when our eyes met—why needed she refer to my last evening's visit—why almost frown upon me—and why, when the barbarous wretch of a serving man hauled me here and there, flourishing his villanous cudgel, and belabouring me outrageously with it, did she laugh and appear to enjoy the treatment I was suffering on her account?"

"The same motive influenced her throughout, I'll be sworn," returned Martin; "the eyes of her foster-father and uncle were upon her; she could do no less than appear indifferent to you; women are adepts at deception, particularly where a lover is in the case; she has deceived her companions completely, by your own account, and is ready to jump in your arms the first opportunity."

"It seems rather paradoxical to me, I must confess," persisted Leon, shaking his head doubtfully; "she would at least have given me some trifling indication of her regard; women may be adepts at deception, but they have a thousand little ways of showing the state of their heart to one they love. Now I saw nothing to-day in any act of Violet's which I could construe even into the smallest exhibition of regard for me."

"I repeat, man, there was no opportunity," urged Martin; "but supposing there was not—supposing she was scornful as you infer, or as dull and senseless as you surmise—are you to have no revenge for the contumely you have undergone on her account? In the first place, I would have my revenge on her for leading me, by those written lines, to infer that she was well affected towards me; secondly, I would be revenged on her friends, through her, for the maltreatment inflicted upon me with their sanction, and, I dare be sworn, evident satisfaction."

"Oh, immense! They appeared in an enormous state of delight while the villain trounced me," ejaculated Leon energetically, appearing sore at the recollection of their enjoyment.

"Well, you are not the man I take you for, if you calmly submit to such an indignity; and what better revenge can you have than by bearing away their treasure? and when you have got the jewel, and grow tired, you can return them the empty casket. Such a revenge will amply repay all you have undergone, and be by no means a disagreeable means of inflicting your vengeance."

"Well, well, Martin, have it your own way," exclaimed Leon; "I am fatigued with all this arguing.

I want a little change, and I have no doubt this affair will yield it me."

"Then you will carry off the girl?"

"Aye! were she as hideous as the face upon the signboard of the hostel at which she is sojourning, and as dull as a born idiot. Let's talk no more o' the matter; but as I am attired, we will to supper and drain a few horns of wine to our success, and then, as you have it, hey for Exmoor!"

They descended to the eating-room, where supper was served, and for a delicate, lady-killing gallant, Leon contrived to make a meal which would have astonished a good trencherman of modern days. After he had concluded eating voraciously of most of the articles with which the table was garnished, he contrived to find room for several goblets of wine; and when he had arrived so far in his eating and drinking, that it might with much reason be concluded he would be unable to move, he declared himself ready for the enterprise. He inquired what arrangements had been made, and Martin satisfied him. Gualtier was then dispatched to make all ready, and within half an hour of nine he returned to say everything was completed; every want had been anticipated, every possible exigency foreseen and provided for, and nothing left undone which could render their success as entire as they could wish. Leon then despatched his people in threes, directing them by different routs to meet at the same spot as had been agreed upon, and when they had all departed, he, with Martin du Bois, and followed by Gualtier, bent their steps to "the Sun."

The bell of old St. Paul's tolled the hour of nine just as Leon and Martin reached the hostel, and in less than a minute afterwards the whole of the retainers were there also. By the advice of Martin, however, they hid themselves in small numbers in the entries of several houses near, while they waited for some token from the author of the lines Leon had received in the bouquet, which might give them a pretext of entering the house; but after waiting for some little time, and all appearing as still as death, Martin exclaimed in a low voice,—

"Suppose, Leon, you were to sing a sonnet in a soft tone of voice—you might give the maiden to understand you were here."

"Yes; and possibly that ale-soaking varlet of a host would make his appearance with an oaken staff."

"And if he should, he would open the door as last night he did, giving us free ingress; and you might at the same time get one of your people to cudgel him well. It might cure him of his impertinent fondness for intrusion."

"As you please; I will essay, but you must put up with any disaster it may bring upon us, you will remember, Martin."

"Certainly. But I fear nothing of that nature; we are too well prepared."

"Gualtier, have you a cudgel?" asked Leon.

"I have not; but one of the people have—a stout oaken one, too," replied Gualtier.

"Do you get it from him, and stand close at the entry of this hostel, accompanied by one of your fellows, and if you hear the door open and should see the host poke his pate out, seize him instantly, gag him, so that he may make no outcry, and then thrash him until your arm aches; when you are tired, give the cudgel to your companion, and let him continue the discipline until I summon you to attend us."

"It shall be done to your satisfaction, I will engage," replied Gualtier, bowing, and retiring to fulfil his orders.

"This was the spot where I stood last night and serenaded; shall I stand here now?" inquired Leon of Martin.

"By all means; the bouquet came from yon window; you cannot do better than stand beneath it; and sing some little light ditty, which, if heard by any one but those we wish, may be deemed the passing strain of some gallant retiring to his domicile."

"Confound me if I do not expect there will be some villanous interruption. I have no objection in life to sing—on the contrary, I rather like it, for I know that heaven has gifted me with a sweet voice, but I like it not to be thrown away upon a set of senseless stocks, who cannot appreciate melody or voice when they hear it, or seem to know no difference between a moving air and a tediously long sermon."

"Ay, but your song will be adressed to one who will hear and can appreciate. Besides, it is of no consequence if she does not; for all we want to do is to attract her attention."

"No consequence, forsooth!" ejaculated Leon; "but I think—"

"You forget what time we are losing. Every moment is an object; pray proceed," interposed Martin, impatiently.

"Well, I suppose I must," he exclaimed, and commenced singing as follows:—

"There are moonbeams on the waters—
There is silence in the air;
There's soft wind among the flowers—
There is beauty everywhere.
Yet there still, love, is a sadness
In this fairy scene to me;
For, oh! I feel no gladness
While thus absent, love, from thee!
Oh, hear me!
Thou only
Can cheer me;
I'm lonely
Without thee;
Come down, sweet love, to me."

Just as he concluded the last strain, Martin grasped his arm, and pointed to a casement above, which slowly opened and remained so for a minute, and then was heard a very pretty voice, but trembling as if labouring under some excitement, singing the accompanying words,—

"A gallant knight, one moonlight night,
Ay, de mi! did serenade,
With his gittern, his ladye bright;
Ay, de mi! heigho! poor maid!
His words were sweet, the music soft,
The sky was calm and clear—
The maiden blushed—her casement oped—
And whisper'd, 'Love, I hear.'
Ay, de mi! heigho! poor maid!

"Her name he breathed, the maiden sigh'd
Ay de mi! 'With dearest hopes
I've brought with me,' the young knight cried,
Ay de mi! 'this stair of ropes.'
The young maid's heart beat loud and fast,
She trembled, blush'd, and sigh'd—
Cried nay! and wept—and yet, at last,
The youth stood by her side.
Ay de mi! heigho! poor maid!"

"Now, by the voice of St. Cecilia! if that does not the fair one credit," exclaimed Leon in a low tone, when the cessation of the voice told him the song was concluded.

"Aye, but the gist of the song is the best of it; that maiden's wit would have aided our scheme mightily," whispered Martin; "how could we have forgotten to bring a rope ladder?"

"By Heaven! I see," returned Leon, "her song was to apprise me of a mode of gaining an admittance to the house. Confusion! to think we should have forgotten so important an assistant; what could you have been thinking about, Martin?"

"Why the truth of the matter is, I spent so much time in persuading you to come, that I should not be surprised if several other things of equal importance are forgotten; however, we must devise some means of remedying the error. Do you continue singing, while I consult some of your people; it is necessary that you keep her attention fixed on you, while we see where an entry is practicable."

"Why not ask her at once, and save that trouble?" asked Leon.

"Because we cannot be satisfied yet that there is no one listening," replied Martin. "An unconsidered exclamation may spoil our whole undertaking; go on with some song, while we see what is be done."

He stole softly away to execute his purpose, and Leon looked earnestly up at the open casement; he fancied once he perceived a white forehead and a pair of eyes peep over the sill of the window; but as it was instantly withdrawn, if his fancy was correct, he could not distinguish the owner, or else it was but fancy; he, however, staid but little time to reflect on the matter, and clearing his throat, he sung in his very sweetest tones, his second ditty, which ran thus—

"I hear thy voice! the sound comes o'er me
As the wind in the warm summer noon;
I feel, as flow'rs feel, when the stormy
Clouds leave them the light of the pale moon.
Thy words are music, deep joy to me;
The kindest tones in others seem but cold
To those of thy rich voice; sweet memory
Bring they me of my brightest hours of old—"

He was here here interrupted by a hand laid upon his shoulder without much attention to courtesy, and a voice which might have ranged the whole compass, if its extent was measured by its one moment leaping up into the alto, and the next moment dropping suddenly into the bass.

"I say, my humming butterfly, you mustn't make this squealing here," said the new comer, a raw-boned spare youth of fifteen.

"Who art thou, varlet?" cried Leon, turning suddenly and fiercely upon him, making him hastily recoil a few paces.

"I'm Nat Nuttles, 'prentice to Tad Tailor, next door," replied Nat; "and master thinks you're after his daughter, and so do I; and he says he won't have it, and neither will I; and he told me to come and tell you so, and here I am; and if he hadn't told me, I'd a-come myself, and told you to be off—so be off!—don't wait till I take your measure with a stave. By the mass! you will find my stave has more pith in it than a hundred of thy drawling, crawling, whining, moaning ballads."

"Look ye!" cried Leon, in an excessive rage, "thou starveling, thou anatomy of a willow-wand, garbed in filthy-scented rags, an' thou dost not at once rid my eyes of thy scant frame, thy tunic shall be trimmed as never was tunic before. Away! thou meagre ghost of a yard measure. Begone! while thy bones are whole."

"O ho! fine words from a trim coxcomb," cried Nat. "A peacock! Why, I help to make better than thee every day. Come, take your hands off me!—come, I say, don't you pull me about now!—it will be worse for you if you do, I can tell you. Watch!" he did not proceed further, for Leon pressed his hand forcibly over his mouth, and prevented him making any noise.

Martin hearing the cry of "Watch!" came hastily up, and asked "What is the matter—who have you there?"

"A miserable skeleton of a tailor's apprentice—a noisy varlet, who—hold still, knave!—bids me hence, thinking I am serenading his master's daughter. Send Gualtier to me directly, will you, Martin?"

Martin obeyed, and Gualtier approached. When he was close, Leon whispered to him, "Take this spectre of a hank of thread, and fulfil on him the directions I gave you concerning the host."

"He shall not lose a blow," replied Gualtier, seizing the struggling apprentice, gagging him with his hand, and dragging him away. When they had disappeared round the corner, Leon said to Martin—

"The skellum interrupted me in my song. What hast thou done to forward the affair?"

"Nothing at present. I hear the tramp of the watch; we must conceal ourselves until they have passed, and then get one of the people to climb up to the first casement, effect an entrance that way, and then he can let us in by the door. Ha! the watch approach—let us away!"

Martin laid hold of Leon's arm, as he concluded, and leading him, sought the shelter of the entry of the hostel. On turning the corner, they saw Gualtier belabouring the unfortunate apprentice with right good will; the poor fellow was skipping about in the most frantic attitudes, but being effectually gagged, his gestures were unaccompanied by any sound save that of the blows upon his shoulders and sides, as they descended with cruel force. When Leon appeared, Gualtier, seeking to give a proof of his zeal and activity, redoubled his blows, and the unlucky Nat Nuttles increased his struggles and jumps. Leon for a moment witnessed this sight with evident satisfaction, but immediately after put up his hand, and in a low tone bade Gualtier desist, which he immediately did; Nat Nuttles made at the same time a desperate exertion, succeeded in disengaging himself from the grasp of the man who held him, instantly took to his heels, and running at the very top of his speed, was out of sight in a few minutes; the retainer and Gualtier were about to follow him, but Leon called them back, made them stand with him and Martin in the entry, and had barely succeeded in getting securely beneath its deep shadow when the watch arrived; as there was nothing to be seen or heard to attract their notice, they passed on, and were soon out of sight; then Leon and his companions emerged from their hiding-place to concert means to enter the house. Gualtier was appealed to.

"Have you tried the door?" he inquired.

"No," was the reply, "of what use would that be?"

"It is worth the trial; if the maiden is aware of your coming she may have contrived to unbar the door, though she may not like to go so far as to tell you to come in."

"Try the door then, Gualtier," said Leon.

Gualtier immediately returned to the entry, and the next moment poked his head forth from it, and said—

"It is as I suspected, the door is only on the latch."

"That is divine," exclaimed Leon, "let us enter; we must be cautious. Gualtier, are the horses ready?"

"They are, sir, beneath an archway close by."

"It is well; summon the retainers, and remain below until you hear us call you to our aid."

"I will," he replied, and then whispered to Martin,

"I shall not forget the venture for the three hundred merks."

"Nor I to pay it if you succeed," returned Martin.

Gualtier then disappeared to obey his orders, and Martin, accompanied by Leon, entered the apartment from which the preceding evening they had made so precipitate a retreat; they groped cautiously about in the darkness to discover the door leading to the rooms above, but each made the circuit of the room without having discovered it; they communicated their ill success to each other in low whispers, and again made an essay to find it, but with no better fortune. Having walked into each other's arms the second time, for each took a different way, Martin uttered impatiently—

"Have you not found it yet?"

"No," replied Leon, in tones of annoyance. "It is vastly singular; there was a door, I know, because I passed through it to the corridor which communicated with the chambers above; and unless this host deals in the occult sciences, it ought to be here now."

"Are you sure we are in the right chamber?" asked Martin.

"'Fore heaven! that never struck me. Which way turned we when we entered but now?" he inquired.

"To the right," answered Martin.

"To the right? Let me remember—as I went out I paid the drawer, and the door was on my right. Aha! Martin, we are in the wrong room; we should have turned to the left as we entered."

"Pish!" muttered Martin. "Confound thy treacherous memory, 'tis worse than a restive horse, 'tis for ever throwing thee. Let us to the entry again and seek the right one; or, by the foul fiend! we shall get nothing but our trouble for our pains."

Leon felt his way out, followed by Martin; and when once more in the entry, they turned to the left, and speedily found the door which they had sought for so earnestly; they mounted the stairs, which creaked rather loudly as they ascended, albeit they used much caution, and now and then stood still, fearing they should be detected before they could accomplish their purpose. However, no notice was taken as though they had been heard, and they gained the corridor.

"Which is the room where Violet and Flora are?" whispered Martin.

"Violet and who?" inquired Leon instantly, evidently astonished by Martin's mention of Flora's name. Martin remembered himself in a moment, and replied rather confusedly—

"Violet and the other."

"I thought you said Flora; and I was going to say—Hark! who's that upon the stairs?"

The sound of a stealthy footstep upon the stairs, which creaked beneath it, made him pause in his intended remark; and after uttering the question which it occasioned, to hold his breath, and listen intently. The footstep continued its slow, cautious progress, until it reached the corridor, and then advanced gently in the direction in which they stood, until it arrived close up to them; when Leon, suddenly putting out his hand, and seizing the comer by the throat, with a strength his effeminate habits would not have given him credit for, exclaimed in a tone scarcely above a whisper,—

"What knave art thou?"

"My master's voice!" ejaculated the stranger; "this is I, Gualtier."

"And what dost thou here, knave?"

"I—I—thought you might want me."

'Want thee? Did I not despatch thee to be at hand with the horses?"

"No matter," interposed Martin, "let him remain; he may be of service."

"Then be cautious, rascal! or that enormously heavy heel of thine will betray us."

"Hist!" whispered Martin, "there are female voices in an apartment close at hand; I can hear them."

A door at the end of the corridor now very slowly opened, and the head of Lucy, the host's daughter, was put forth, in the attitude of listening; presently her sister Cecilia put her face over her shoulder, and they plainly heard her say,—

"Can you hear him, Lucy."

"No," Lucy replied; "everything is as quiet as the grave."

"Perhaps he did not understand that he was to stop, and when the watch came round it frightened him away. When you wrote those lines, you should have told him that you would get Durth to leave the door unfastened; now you see he's gone, and instead of having a pleasant chat, we shall be obliged to say our prayers and go to bed, and perhaps never see him any more."

"Oh yes, we shall; perhaps he'll come back again presently. We can sit up a little longer and watch at the window."

"Oh no, he won't; I peeped out just now, and saw a number of men below, under the window; I suppose they are the watch, and while they are there he won't come, and perhaps when they are gone it will be too late."

"Hush; if you talk so loud, father will hear us; and now mother's away he's crosser than ever. Are the two ladies in the next room gone to bed yet, I wonder?"

"No, I heard them talking just this moment, and moving about the room."

"Well, then, let's go back to the window and watch for him; I'm sure he'll come back."

"Oh, I hope he will," exclaimed Cissy.

The door was then gently closed, and they disappeared. When all was quiet again, Leon whispered to Martin—

"So then, confound it, the lines were written by Lucy; the host's daughter, and not the fair Violet; I wish I had known that, I would not—"

"You are now too far to retract," whispered Martin, hastily. "You heard them say Violet and Flora—the other had not retired to rest, and were in the next room. Let us to our work at once, and it will be much easier than I anticipated."

"Now I come to think again, why not run away with the host's daughters?" whispered Leon. "I'faith, they will come with little or no persuasion; and look at the immensity of fatigue it will save us, because then we need not go to Exmoor at all."

"No, no, no," uttered Martin, quickly; "would you let so great a prize slip through your fingers now it is in your grasp, and content thyself with a tapster's daughter, when thou can'st have one so far her superior in everything, just to save thyself a little trouble? Besides, thou can'st have these girls at any time, but thou can'st not Violet."

"Why are *you* so urgent that I should carry off this pretty Violet? What is thy motive, for one thou hast, I know? And what is more, thou dost know somewhat of her and her friends, I am assured."

"Well, I confess I do know her and her friends, and I have a good motive for her being thy prize, which thou shalt know anon—this is neither time nor place. Let us cease this whispering, we shall awake every one in the hostel."

"We will take the chance of that," persisted Leon;

"I do not see why I should undergo all this tremendous trouble to gratify some hidden motive of thine."

"I grant that," said Martin; "only lend me thy people, and I will spare you the fatigue by conveying her off myself."

"Hum!" muttered the gallant, pausing for a moment as if to consider the policy of complying with the request; but as his self-love could not bear the idea of another being successful with a beautiful maiden who was comparatively within his power, he said with a sudden decision of manner,—

"No; as we commenced, we will proceed. Gualtier, while we enter one of these chambers, do thou keep that door fast, which a moment since you beheld unclose; and now, Martin, to the chamber of these damsels."

They advanced very cautiously, feeling along the oaken wainscot to find the door of Violet's room; they discovered one, and tried it; it yielded to their essay, and they entered; all within was shrouded in complete darkness, but they heard a very loud snoring, which evidenced to them that they were not in the right room, and consequently they retired; but Leon's sword got entangled in something, he could not distinguish what, and it fell down with a loud noise; instantly they heard the gruff voice of a man as if suddenly awakening out of a sleep, exclaim,—

"Hollo! who's there?"

"They remained perfectly silent, and the man muttering something about the "villanous cat," and crying "Hish! hish!" several times, composed himself to sleep again. They waited until his snore rung through the chamber again; he did not keep them long, and then they stole out of the room. They tried the door on the opposite side; it was fast, but they heard Flora exclaim—

"Oh! Great Heaven have mercy upon us! Violet, look there! the latch is moving up and down!"

Martin immediately, with great presence of mind, gave several low taps at the door. Violet approached it, and inquired who knocked: Martin recognised her voice in an instant, and its tone seemed to thrill through every nerve in his body, but he conquered the feeling, and in a voice as like Ethelbert's as he could assume, he whispered,—

"Dear Violet, be not alarmed—Halbert is taken with a sudden illness; he bade me call thee. If thou hast not retired to rest, wilt thou immediately accompany me to him? or if thou hast already sought thy couch, I will wait until thou hast attired thyself."

"I will come instantly!" cried Violet, quickly and agitatedly. "Good Heaven! I hope it is nothing serious!" and she proceeded to unfasten the door."

"Throw thy mantle over her the instant she appears, and carry her away," hurriedly whispered Martin to Leon; "I will attend to the others—a moment's hesitation will ruin all."

The door at the instant opened, and Violet appeared, bearing a taper. Leon did as Martin directed. The light was extinguished in the act; he seized her in his arms, and as well and as quickly as he was able, he bore her struggling and alarmed almost to fainting to the stairs. Flora, however, who stood behind Violet, directly the door was opened, saw the light flash upon the faces of Martin and Leon, saw the next minute Leon cast his mantle over Violet, and uttered a succession of piercing shrieks, before Martin could prevent her. In his rage at the moment, he attempted to draw his anelas and stab her, but, in the hurry, it got entangled, and he could not disengage it. He uttered several fierce oaths, and seizing her hair, which was very long, he twisted it across her mouth, keeping his hand over it, and destroying all sound completely. He lifted her up in his arms, and followed Leon, but was encountered by Ethelbert Evesham, who sprung upon him like a tiger, shouting,—

"Villain! what means this outrage?" and seizing him fiercely, endeavoured to rescue Flora from him; but Martin held her with all his strength, and cried out to Gualtier to come to his aid, exclaiming,—

"This is he, Gualtier! remember thy three hundred merks."

"Ha! dog—wretch!—I know thy voice—is it thou?" cried Ethelbert; and the next moment Martin felt a dagger buried in his shoulder. He staggered back, but did not relinquish his hold of Flora. Gualtier came up and made a desperate blow at Ethelbert, but in the dark missed him, and nearly fell with the force of the blow. As he stumbled forward he struck against Ethelbert: each seized the other with the utmost fierceness, and both, at the same moment, stabbed together—dealing their blows with all the vigour they were masters of. As the dagger of Ethelbert struck violently the body of Gualtier, he uttered a loud laugh, and cried tauntingly, believing he had given Ethelbert a death-blow,—

"Fool! I wear a shirt of mail; thy blade cannot touch me."

He had hardly uttered the words when he was hurled with tremendous violence to the ground. His breath was nearly shaken out of his body—he was almost deprived of his senses; however, by a strong effort, he shook it off again, and gained his feet. He sprung forward—encountered, as he imagined, Ethelbert again, and grinding his teeth hard he raised his dagger, and employing his greatest force, he buried it to the hilt in his antagonist's body. As he drew it out, the death-shriek rung loudly through the corridor; it was followed by a heavy groan, and he cast the body from him; it fell heavily upon the ground, and drawing the dagger through his fingers to wipe off the blood that clotted it, he said, coolly,—

"There comes three hundred merks to my purse."

The whole house was now in a state of utter confusion; several doors in the corridor opened and people appeared. Gualtier dashed through them and rushed down below, hearing his master calling him loudly by name. Several of the retainers were mounting the stairs to keep the inmates from descending, and he observed, by the light of a couple of torches which the men had brought with them and ignited, one or two struggling in the arms of some of them below. As soon as he gained the apartment, Leon ejaculated,—

"A pestilence on thee! thou tardy knave, where did'st thou tarry? Lead us to the place where the horses are standing on the instant. Quick, knave! art thou dreaming?"

"This way, this way," cried Gualtier; "they are not a stone's throw. Everything is ready for instant departure: all the people here know their duty. Follow me."

He ran out of the entry, closely followed by Martin and Leon, each bearing their respective prisoners, both of whom had fainted from excessive fright; they proceeded down the street a short distance, and then turning abruptly up a very narrow, dirty alley, they reached a dark archway, beneath which there were three mounted retainers, having four steeds in their charge. At a word they emerged from their obscurity, and the maidens were placed upon two of the steeds; Leon sprung upon the horse on which he had placed Violet, but Martin made Gualtier take charge of Flora while he attended to the wound he had received in his shoulder. They were all mounted, and just preparing to start, when suddenly the heavy tramp, as of a body of men, was heard, and one voice sung as

follows, so loudly and distinctly that every word was heard by them,—

"Brothers, come on!
The wronged shall be righted,
No wrong be unrequited,
No 'Prentice shall be slighted,
While we are thus united—
Brothers, come on!"

"Hell and death!" exclaimed Gualtier, "the apprentices are rising. What the devil's in the wind now? Who could have called them up?"

"The knave whom I consigned to your cudgel told me he was an apprentice," said Leon; "perhaps he has done it. But what need that matter to us?"

"Unfortunately, everything; they are at least one or two hundred strong, I can tell, by the beat of their feet; they will surround us, and beat us to death with their clubs."

"But we can go another way, and avoid them," suggested Martin.

"Not very well. This is the only way we can go, without returning to 'The Sun;' and this way leads us right into their arms."

"Let us return to 'The Sun,' and go round by Watling Street," said Martin.

"But if we do," returned Gualtier, "we shall be caught sight of, and these 'prentices can run like devils; they will keep on our track until they get some horsemen to pursue us. The best thing we can do is to wait here until they pass."

"Very well then, we will wait," said Leon.

The voice of the singer grew louder as it approached nearer, and the tramp of the feet sounded still more plainly. The next verse they heard ran thus:—

"Brothers, come on!
And when the foe we're meeting,
Let none think of retreating!
And though there be entreating,
Spare no gallant a beating —
Brothers, come on!"

The apprentices took up the burden, and shouted, at the top of their voices—

"Brothers, come on!"

"The foul fiend seize the knaves!" cried Gualtier, suddenly. "Hark! they are spreading—some are coming this way; we shall be caught now—be completely trapped—and there is no way of preventing it."

"If we were to make for the archway again," suggested one of the men, "I think we might elude them; it goes a long way back, and it isn't likely they'd think of looking down there."

"But if they should, we should be worse off than here," said Gualtier.

"The suggestion's a good one, we will try it; and if we should be discovered, we can but dash through them and take our chance after all," said Martin, wheeling his horse round, and leading the way. He was immediately followed by the rest of the party, and gaining safely the old archway, they retired beneath it, backing their horses as far down as the place would permit. They remained there about a minute, and then they heard the rapid pattering of feet down the street, and soon they perceived numbers of youths, armed with clubs and staves, pass the mouth of their retreat. They ran hastily on; some few looked hastily down the archway, but the darkness was too dense for their eyes to penetrate it, and they went on without searching more closely. Once they were nearly being discovered; for one of the steeds, startled by the clatter raised by the apprentices as they passed, grew restive; it was as much as the man mounted upon him could manage to prevent him from caracoling and prancing, and as he moved his feet about, he struck against a stone; the man stuck his spurs into him in a moment of rage, and as he held his mouth hard, up went the beast on his hind legs, and down he came, to rear high up again. Three or four of the more adventurous apprentices, who had entered the mouth of the archway, to search if any unfortunate gallant had hidden himself there, heard the impatient fretting steps of the horse upon the soft earth, and concluded they had caught some unhappy wight; they were just about to rush down, in spite of the remonstrances of one of them, who avowed the place was haunted, when their eyes encountered the dim form of the horse on his hinder legs; with one accord, they shouted out, "The Devil! the Devil!" and fled in a state of great fright. They were the last of the apprentices who had passed down the narrow street. Leon, who was excited and impatient, resolved to wait no longer; he clapped spurs to his steed, and quitted the retreat, followed by his companions.

"Now, Gualtier!" he exclaimed, when they were all emerged, "lead the way at the top of thy speed; make thy beast fly, and we'll hang on to thy heels as closely as if thou wert the goddess Fortune, or were bestriding the far-famed Pegasus. Away with thee, man! never stop to gape at me with thy enormously wide mouth, but away."

"You shall have no cause to complain of my steed," replied Gualtier, "or my good will to make him leave the young rascally 'prentices behind us."

He was here interrupted by the loud shrill voice of one of the apprentices, crying, "Clubs and staves! clubs and staves! What, ho! the game is started! follow! 'prentices, follow! The lozels are here, away! Ho! follow! follow! Clubs and staves! clubs and staves!"

"Curses light upon the squalling hound! he will bring the whole tribe upon us," roared Gualtier; "whip and spur! whip and spur! bury your rowels in your beasts; spare them not, they have the true blood in them and can bear it; follow, we shall soon leave the aglet babies behind." He struck his spurs into his horse's sides, as he concluded, with such force that the beast reared up with agony, and then sprang forward at a tremendous pace. Leon de la Agnelet, who was an expert horseman, followed closely, and Martin with the retainers brought up the rear. They dashed down Chepeside, left old St. Pauls to the left, and made for Holbourne. The apprentices, roused by the cry of the one who had discovered Leon and his party, gave chase, hallooing and shouting like a pack of hounds in full cry. They could, as Gualtier had expressively said, "run like devils;" and at their swiftest speed they followed upon the fugitives. Their outcries, sent forth at the top of their voices, bid fair to set all Chepeside in an uproar; casements were thrown open, and heads dressed for slumber were thrust forth; entries gave to sight many who had not yet retired to rest. The only persons who, as in all such cases, should have been on the spot—viz., the watch, were no where to be seen.

"Ho, there!" shouted a dozen or twenty voices. "'Prentices to the rescue! After the ravishers! after them, bold hearts! To horse, ye that have them, and away! Ho, follow! follow! Horsemen away there!"

"Ho! horsemen, away there!" roared the apprentices, taking up the cry. "No quarter to the knavish gallants! no mercy to the villains who steal away our maidens!"

"And beat honest 'prentices," shouted Nat Nuttles,

nt the top of his voice, although he took the precaution of keeping, while the chase was kept up, a very prudent position among those who formed the rear.

were not made by God to be trounced with their cudgels; shew them that we have rights, lads, and the courage to defend them. Hurra! after them, my

"On, on, brave hearts!" he continued, letting every one pass him; "spare neither wind, nor feet, nor staves: shew these vile coxcombs honest 'prentices

fleet friends—we hang on their skirts, and we'll trim them handsomely, when we catch them. Hoy, hoy! hurra for the 'prentices!"

The apprentices, who were nearly two hundred strong, and were each moment having their number added to, had each something of the nature of Nat Nuttles' exhortation to shout, and as at least a hundred of them had shrill tenor voices, it may be imagined that their yells—for they were little else—would, without any great stretch of imagination, throw the far-famed clatter of the "Tower of Babel" into the shade; the more particularly as to their clamour they added that of dashing their clubs and staves together, as a sort of pantomimic display of their intentions towards the gallants, when they caught them, of which they had great hopes, and to do them justice, made great endeavours to accomplish; but, unfortunately for their honest resolve, the fugitives were mounted on horses possessing great speed, and the advice of Gualtier "to whip and spur" being to the full followed, the apprentices discovered, with much mortification, and in spite of the application of fresh exertions, that every minute increased the distance between them. By the time Holbourne was more than half passed over, and that part gained which is now called High Holborn, but which was then all but open country, the pursued were out of sight, and they arrived at the little village of St. Giles, without being able to discover which road they had taken; however, as they were now joined by several horsemen, they lost no time in conjecture, but dividing themselves into two parties—one took their way down the Oxford-road, now Oxford-street, at the corner of which stood a finger-post, with "YE WAY TO REDEING" carved upon it in large characters—and the other along the main road leading to Hampstead, each party racing along in the fond hope that they should be the fortunate one who would overtake them, rescue the maidens—for at "Y^e Sunne" they had learned who had been carried off—and inflict summary vengeance upon the ravishers and the maltreators of their brother 'prentice, Nat Nuttles, who it was, in revenge for the sound cudgelling he had received, that had raised them.

Gualtier had taken the road to Reading after quitting St. Giles's; and as they dashed down it at a furious rate, Leon cried to Martin,—

"The yells of the rascals are dying away."

"Yes," replied Martin; "but it does not behove us to slacken our pace in consequence. London must be left a long way behind us ere our speed is in any degree lessened."

"They must be fast steeds to overtake us, while we continue this pace," observed Gualtier, overhearing the remark; "but it cannot last very long, and when we have covered another mile or two, we must drop into a steadier one, or the beasts will be knocked up before we have gained half the distance we ought to make before morning."

"Do whatever is best, Gualtier," said Leon; and then inquired, "Has the maiden in your arms recovered from her swoon?"

"She has," he replied; "but as this was the one who alarmed the whole hostel by her shrieks, I thought it best to gag her before she came to, and it will be prudent to keep her so until we get far enough from the town; then her screams will signify nothing; but if they should, ha, ha! I've a long knife here would quiet the lustiest traveller that ever in a midnight carouse roused sleeping folks from their beds."

"Why, thou vile caitiff!" cried Leon with sudden anger, "an' thou darest make again such a villanous cold-blooded remark in my presence, I'll hew thee from thy steed as I'd cut down a reptile. Stab a defenceless maiden! Why, thou evil-minded knave! what is there in my conduct that thou should'st utter such monstrous sentiments in my presence? Dost thou think, dog, because for once I have done violence to my own feelings by carrying off by force these maidens, that I would tolerate even the supposition of such rascality as thou hast threatened? Look ye, Gualtier, thou'st been about my person in close attendance some years; it is the first time I ever heard thee make use of such an execrable speech—let it be the last. I know not if thou wert in earnest or not—I hope not; but remember this, another such graceless threat, and thou shalt, on our arrival at Exmoor, swing about in the wind, thy graceless person disgracing one of the many oaks there; and mark what I say well, the maiden before thee, and the one I have now in my possession, I command, shall be treated as though they were my sisters, and entitled to the highest respect and courtesy it is in your brute nature to assume. If I have committed the weakness, under the influence of strong persuasion, of stealing them away, I will not, at least, have the unknightly charge upon me of ill-using them by the smallest act, or by consenting even indirectly to it. Bear what I have said in mind—a movement, a word, aye, a look of harshness or discourtesy, shall be visited with my severest vengeance. Thou'st seen, Gualtier, that if I wear not the garb of a soldier, or mix in deeds of blood and strife, that when occasion demands I *can* act as one, and rest assured, knave, an' thou givest me cause, I will."

"My speech was a jesting and a hasty one," replied Gualtier, with affected humility, on finding that, in launching out into a little liberty which he thought he might take, he had gone quite out of his latitude. "I humbly crave your pardon, and beg of you, honoured master, to cast away your displeasure, for I swear I will not again offend you in a like manner."

"Look thou dost not," Leon replied, haughtily; "or if thou dost, look to thyself. Remove the gag from the maiden's mouth instantly, and see if thou hast the ability in any way to soften the exceeding fear she must be labouring under through her situation."

"Your command shall be obeyed," returned Gualtier, removing with alacrity the gag from Flora's mouth; and upon her almost frantic enquiry of what they were going to do, did the best in his way to pacify her, which, however, he could not effect until he had satisfied her that Violet was with them, and no harm would be done to either.

"Is Violet yet out of her faint?" inquired Martin, with some anxiety, which he strove to conceal in the tone of his voice.

"Why, she is and she is not," replied Leon; "I cannot exactly say that she has recovered, but she breathes, and has heaved several heavy sighs, but does not appear to be conscious of aught."

"Hillioh! ho! hillioh!" suddenly cried a voice, which, though at a distance, they heard very plainly, and likewise distinctly heard, "Follow! follow!" accompanied by the hum of many voices, still farther off, replying with all their strength of lungs. They all hastily looked back, and discovered several horsemen at some distance from them, urging their steeds at the top of their speed to overtake them. To dig their spurs into the sides of their horses, and apply the whip vigorously to them, was the spontaneous act of all who beheld the pursuers, and used likewise every effort to incite them to a swiftness beyond their already tremendous pace.

"The villains have opened upon us, and many of them are mounted too," cried Leon, encouraging his steed to dash along at a terrific rate. "By Jupiter! but it grows exciting; the rascals have laid well on

our track. It now depends upon whoever has the best cattle. These we bestride ought to be matchless; what say you, Gualtier?"

"They are; there's no seven in England, or the world, to cope with them," replied Gualtier. "But this will not be a trial of their mettle with the others; a little way beyond this spot we shall double upon the fellows at our heels handsomely. I know a way through a lane, which will shorten our distance, and which they will never think of following us down."

"Unless they see us go down it," suggested Martin.

"But that they cannot do," returned Gualtier; "you see yon trees lining each side of the road a short distance beyond us, and hiding the turn it takes?"

"Well," said Leon, impatiently, as he paused for their assent.

"The road winds very much for a mile or so along there," he continued, "and turning short in one of the winds are three different twisting, turn-again lanes; we shall take one of them, and be far down it before they arrive at the top, and my life to a ragged capuchon they do not guess the one we have taken."

"Make for it, then, with all speed," urged Leon.

"We're losing no time," muttered Gualtier, striking his spurs into the already gored flanks of his galloping steed.

The "hilliohs" of the pursuers still sounded in their ears, and as they ever and anon looked back, they could see them in the clear moonlight advancing along the road, unobscured as yet by scarce a tree, with a speed hardly less swift than their own; more than three miles of the road were passed over, and the road, nearly straight, disclosed the dusky and minute forms of the apprentices in the very extremity of the distance, holding on their way perseveringly after the horsemen.

Every now and then Leon and Martin applied their whips nervously to their horses, unnecessarily, for they were already going as fast as they could gallop; but as the shouts, though faint, still rung in their ears, they could not help, in the fear of being overtaken, urging their horses to a speed akin to flying: it was with satisfaction they beheld the dark shadows of trees begin at short intervals to throw their "long length" across the road, and each moment to thicken, and soon to ascertain that they had passed the first wind in the road, which hid them from their pursuers. They kept on as swift as ever, and quickly arrived at a part where the trees were so thickly clustered as to make it almost appear a copse; they were not more than half through it, when they saw it intersected by the lanes which Gualtier mentioned. Turning his horse's head suddenly, as he pointed one out to the rest of the party, he dashed down it, followed by them, too glad to avail themselves of such an opportunity of eluding pursuit. The lane was very narrow, and thickly studded with high hawthorn bushes and trees of various descriptions; the passage was difficult and heavy, but they were in no frame to note the obstacles to their progress, save when the occasional necessity of checking their speed arose where some part was unusually rough; they suffered nothing to impede them, but kept on until the exceeding stillness reigning around, broken only by the sound of the horses' feet, infused so much confidence into them, that, at the suggestion of Gualtier, they made their gallop a light trot, in order to relieve the animals, who were reeking with perspiration. They passed through lane after lane, varying but little in their character, but at length appearing interminable from their constant succession. Leon, particularly, thought so; he was unaccustomed to such exertion as he had within the last three hours undergone, and began to grow much fatigued, and, as a natural consequence, to magnify every mile into two. As he drew near the end of what he fancied at least the hundredth lane, and observed Gualtier, with a most provoking business-like manner, strike off into the hundred-and-first, one whose very aspect teemed with the trouble and fatigue it would occasion to thread, he cried out, petulantly,—

"Are you sure, Gualtier, you know your way?"

"Every inch of it," was Gualtier's laconic, but expressive reply.

"How many more of these infernally narrow lanes have we to wind among?" he asked.

"They are so numerous it would be almost impossible to count them," returned Gualtier.

"Can't you take us some other way, instead of this vile, twisting, uneven, jolting, rugged, cursed tiring one?" inquired he, with a dissatisfied air at Gualtier's reply to his previous inquiry. "Are we to pursue perpetually places of this fashion until we get to Exmoor?"

"Not all the way—we have several long bleak moors to pass over; but it is very necessary we keep along this way, for the only way beside is by the highroad, which, added to its being not so near, would expose us to the pursuit of those we have so completely shaken off. There is no one on our track now; I would not answer one moment from another that that would be the case were we on the high road."

"I suppose you are right," muttered Leon, with a little groan of desperate resignation, "and I must submit; but how long are we to continue galloping along in this break-neck fashion, ere we bait the steeds and recruit ourselves?"

"In half an hour hence," returned Gualtier; "we shall have then got over above twenty miles. I know a little cottage where we can get everything we need, and where there are no prying folks to ask any questions, or take notice of anything you wish not to be observed; a host and his wife, who can, for considerations—which have weighty influence with everybody—be blind, deaf, or dumb, if required, or all, should it be necessary."

"Useful people; but infernally despicable. Well, lead us thither as quick as thou can'st," ejaculated Leon; and then turning to Martin, said, "Has not this hard ride made thee immensely fatigued?"

"More than I should otherwise have been, had I not had this desperate gash in my shoulder," he rejoined; "but as I have not had time to have it properly bandaged, the blood has not been thoroughly stanched; but when we stop, I will see to it."

"Aye, Maltra—I mean Martin du Bois—"

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Violet, suddenly, as the name alighted upon her ear, and speaking for the first time; "Martin du Bois! then, indeed, I am lost!"

"What said'st thou, maiden?" interrupted Leon, quickly; "said'st thou aught of Martin du Bois?"

"Pshaw!" cried Martin, quickly; "she could have said nothing of me. An' thou art weary of thy burden, Leon, I will bear her for thee until we arrive at the hut."

"No, no, no!" cried Violet, earnestly, and clinging terrifiedly to Leon; "save me from that dreadful man. I know not who you are, or why you have done me this violence. I implore thee to have mercy upon me; restore me to those from whom you have torn me."

"She is not in her senses yet," cried Martin, with a forced laugh, fearing that her entreaties might have too powerful an effect upon Leon's sympathy. "She forgets 'the strange person,' Leon, who through her

suffered such indignity. She may alter her tone when she discovers him, and has an opportunity of judging who and what he really is. Speak not to her yet, Leon; she needs a little rest before she can estimate anything at its proper value. When she quite recovers, she will be better able to judge her situation."

"Oh!" ejaculated Violet; "if thou hast any power here, set me free. Listen not to that wicked being, whose villanies have already occasioned such terrible effects. Oh, if thy heart is not dead to the better feelings of humanity, let not the evil suggestions of one so vile induce thee to commit such wrong as to make thee blush with very shame for having injured a week defenceless girl;—thou, a knight, as thy garb bespeaks thee to be, who art sworn to defend and protect, and not inflict cruel deeds upon desolate maidens."

"Never heed her ravings," cried Martin, quickly; "it is but the cant they have all at the tip of the tongue; a few soft persuasions will drive it all away."

"It is a matter in which I know how to act without thy advice," exclaimed Leon, with a sudden coolness to him. "I shall do what I esteem necessary, unbiassed by thy suggestions, or those of any other person. Look ye, Martin, though a gallant affecting many fancies, and what may be deemed effeminacies, I am not a puppet; I can think and act for myself. I have given way hitherto to thy persuasions in this affair, I shall now proceed in all the future matters concerning it along my own path. When thy advice is needful, I will seek it of thee; until then, thou wilt oblige me by retaining it for thine own use."

"You speak as though you were offended," said Martin, when he concluded, struggling to keep down the haughty and enraged feelings which possessed him. "What has happened, may I ask, to occasion this sudden alteration?"

"Perhaps I fancy I have gone too far; perhaps I fancy thou hast deceived me. But whatever it may be, this is neither time nor place to discuss the matter; that time will shortly arrive, and if thou dost still desire to know what thou hast now inquired, I shall have no hesitation in giving it thee," returned Leon, gravely.

"Be it so," replied Martin, haughtily, and then muttered—"Weak fool, you shall smart for this!"

A silence of a minute elapsed, which Leon broke by addressing Violet, saying in a kind tone of voice—

"In carrying thee away, I have been somewhat misled; however, thy appeal to my honour shall not be made in vain. I cannot return thee to thy friends until the steeds have been rested; but when they have, and thou dost still persist in returning, in spite of all persuasions—for none but words shall be used to make thee forego thy determination—then I pledge thee mine honour thou shalt be restored, uninjured, to those who are now seeking thee. Fear nothing; no harm or ill shall happen to thee while I am near thee; albeit, it seemeth strange that I, a chief party in thy abstraction, should say this; but strange as it seems, it shall be strictly acted up to."

"I will put trust in thee," replied Violet, "believing that, for the sake of thine honour, thou wilt not deceive me."

Leon bowed his head, but answered not; and for some distance their journey was pursued in silence, until Violet, observing that there was a led horse, begged to be permitted to exchange her situation for a seat upon its back—a request which Leon granted, and they pulled up, in order to make the alteration. One of the retainers lifted her from Leon's steed, and placed her upon the unoccupied horse. As soon as this was accomplished, Flora, who had witnessed with some impatience, and no little anxiety, the transfer, exclaimed to her—

"Oh! Violet, I am so delighted to see you there—pray ride by my side. I do not now feel half so much fear in knowing that thour't well and near me. I feel almost happy now, for I thought they had killed you with fright, as they nearly have me."

"Hark!" suddenly interrupted Gualtier, "a horseman is coming this way; I can hear the swift foot of his horse."

Every ear was immediately directed to catch the sound; and the fresh, cool, but gentle wind of the morning, which blew in their faces, brought also the sound of the rapid advance of a steed. A minute elapsed, and the sound drew nearer. It was evident the rider was urging his horse at the top of his speed.

"Baldric," cried Gualtier to the retainer who had lifted Violet into the saddle of the horse she was upon, "mount thy beast, and reconnoitre who this comer is."

"Aye," replied Leon, "and if he declares himself in search of these maidens, bring him hither without delay."

"With all deference to thy judgment," replied Gualtier, "it will be better to avoid him. The maidens may be safely restored to their friends without its being known who appeared in the business, which cannot be done if this stranger prove their friend, and is suffered to come up with us; explanations will be demanded, and angry words may arise, which will do good to none, and in all probability make matters worse."

"Thy counsel likes me better this time than the last," said Leon; "do as thou wilt;" and he appeared to sink into a fit of deep musing, while Gualtier despatched the retainer. Before, however, he started, Martin hastily seized his horse's bridle, and whispered in his ear,—

"Stay him, whoever he is; but if in pursuit of these girls, cut him down, and claim of me thine own reward."

The man gave a grim smile, nodded his head, and striking his spurs into his horse, disappeared round a turn of the lane. As soon as he had gone, Violet guided her horse close to Flora, whose cheeks, bathed in tears, betokened the alarm as well as anguish she was suffering; but Violet, though herself the victim of great apprehension, with the same sweetness and tenderness of disposition which characterised her every act, strove to the utmost of her power to cheer her,—to so hide her own fears, and anticipate out of the evil they were in, the best to come, that Flora felt the influence of her words and manner, and began to appear at last more cheerful.

The retainer had departed at least ten minutes, and the noise of his horse's feet had been heard and traced some distance; at length they appeared suddenly to stop, and they waited with much anxiety to hear the result; but, after waiting for a little while, though but a few minutes, it appeared to be so long that Gualtier, growing impatient, was just about dispatching a second, to ascertain the reason of the absence of the first, when the clatter of a horse's feet rapidly approaching them broke upon their ears, and as he concluded it to be the return of Baldric, he countermanded the retainer and awaited his arrival. But it was with no little astonishment they saw the horse riderless come tearing round the corner, and on reaching the party, stop and place himself by the side of the others, as though he was still under the guidance of his rider.

"What, in the name of the devil!" exclaimed Gual-

tier, "can be the meaning of this? away ye two," he cried, addressing the remaining two retainers, "and discover what has befallen Baldric."

"The pommel is all besmeared with wet blood," cried one of the men suddenly.

"What?" roared Gualtier, directing his steed to Baldric's horse, and finding the man's words to be true, "by Sathanas! it is so; away with ye, away!" he cried to them, "and discover what the meaning of this can be."

The men clapped spurs to their steeds and galloped away. Martin's countenance exhibited signs of great uneasiness, and he listened to the departing footsteps with considerable anxiety; his perplexity and disturbed manner generally was so evident, that Leon observed it, and drew from it anticipations not exactly agreeable; banishing somewhat of his previous coolness, he addressed him, and asked—

"What dost augur of this strange occurrence, Martin?"

"The worst to all," he replied; "if thy retainer hath been slain, it hath been so sudden that not one nor two hath accomplished it; and should we be overtaken, it is something beyond a doubt that the like fate awaits us. Our steeds are jaded from the tremendous rate they have travelled at, and unless the hut Gualtier is to lead us to be so well hidden, or in itself contains the means of secresy, we shall have to sell our lives as dearly as we can."

"Thy augury is a gloomy one," exclaimed Leon, changing to his coldness of tone, and apparently not much moved by Martin's words, though they conveyed matter so alarming. "What are thy forebodings, Gualtier?" he inquired.

"Not so bad as those of the Chevalier Martin du Bois," returned Gualtier. "We are not far from our resting place, and I will answer for our safety there."

"You will prove the best prophet, I will wager," exclaimed Leon, listlessly, and relapsed once more into a fit of musing. Martin, on the contrary, seemed nervously anxious to ascertain the cause for the strange incident which had just occurred, and even spurred his horse for a little way in the direction the retainers had gone, as though to meet them. Then he returned, to depart again, again to return; at last he rode up to Gualtier, and asked, "Hast thou done aught for the three hundred merks?"

"It is earned," was Gualtier's laconic reply, dropping his eyes before the bright searching glance of Martin. The answer appeared to afford Martin great relief, for he laughed triumphantly, and muttered,

"That debt is paid—that vengeance is accomplished. I fear for nothing, let who will come, for *he* will no longer be among them!"

"Here they come back," exclaimed Gualtier, suddenly, after having listened with the greatest intentness for some time. Martin drew his sword, and rode forward to meet them round the wind of the lane, and in another minute he appeared again, followed by the others at full trot. As soon as they arrived, one of them rode direct up to Gualtier, and Flora screamed aloud with affright, for before the retainer lay the ghastly body of Baldric quite dead, with half-a-dozen deep wounds inflicted upon his body. The scream of Flora and a hasty exclamation, with an oath, from Gualtier, aroused Leon from his abstraction, and the instant his eyes alighted on the body he demanded, hastily,—

"How came he thus? Where did ye find him? Who was near him? Have ye found his assassin?"

To each of which questions a negative answer was returned, excepting the one respecting his discovery; they had found him, they said, lying upon his back, in the centre of the road; but although they had searched around for some distance, they could discover no one.

"But I'll swear I heard the sound of horse's feet before Baldric left us," cried Gualtier, "so there must have been a horseman near. Ye did not look, knaves, closely enough, or ye would have unkennelled him; he could not have been far away when you arrived at the spot."

"He wasn't near," replied the retainer, bearing the body; "the road winds very much where we discovered him, and we looked everywhere without finding anything but this," he added, holding up a bloody dagger, "and this was buried to the hilt in his heart; there was this strip of parchment rolled round the hilt."

"Ha! give it to me," exclaimed Martin, quickly, snatching at it as the man was placing it in Leon's hand. Leon drew his hand hastily back, and exclaimed in a freezing tone,—

"By your leave!" and then opening it, he perceived by the light of the moon some hastily scrawled characters; which in the imperfect light he with some difficulty deciphered. He read them aloud, and Martin felt a cold icy thrill run through his frame as he heard the following words,—

"This may meet the eye of Martin Du Bois; if it should—let him beware: THE SNAKE is neither scotched nor killed!"

"What may this mean, Martin du Bois?" asked Leon.

"I cannot tell!" he replied, with a forced laugh or affected indifference, although a horror was upon him which nearly paralysed him. "How should I tell?" he demanded.

"The words being especially directed to thee, thou should'st be at no loss to understand them. However, it matters not; thy affected dullness of comprehension but tallies with thy false representations, which have placed me in this position."

"How, false?" cried Martin, fiercely; "what mean ye, Leon de la Agnelet? Retract your words at once, or—"

"Peace! there is a time for all things, Martin du Bois. I have uttered nothing I shall hesitate to repeat at any time, and one will soon come to enable thee to ask an explanation, and I to give it to such extent and in such fashion as I may see fit. Gualtier, lead on to the resting-place as quickly as thou canst, and you who bear the body fall into the rear; when you arrive at the hostel we are approaching, dig a grave and give it burial."

Gualtier obeyed him, and with Flora dashed off at considerable speed; Violet kept close to him, Martin reined his steed as if to ride at her side; but Leon, observing his act, anticipated it, and judging by the involuntary shudder Violet gave as Martin approached her, as well as by the readiness she exhibited to admit his approximity in preference to Martin's, he felt satisfied that he had acted rightly. He, however, did not offer to speak until entering a terribly lonely wild-looking place, one fit for any deed, however horrible. Violet turned to him, and looking appealingly, said,—

"You will not break your word?"

"Thou hast said thou wilt put thy trust in me," he returned, "thou shalt not be deceived; I have pledged thee mine honour, which—though I am sorry to confess has been in considerable jeopardy several times—has never yet been forfeited, neither do I intend it should be; therefore have no fear, though I acknowledge this horrid-looking passage is sufficient to create it in one less timid or gentle than thyself."

He rode on some distance further in silence and almost in darkness, for the overhanging trees nearly rendered the moonlight inadmissible; but he suddenly said,—

"I know not how or why it is that I should feel towards thee, maiden, a respect and almost reverence which I remember not to have before experienced when engaged in female society—natheless, I never willingly or wittingly wronged any one of thy sex—but there is somewhat about thee which elevates thee above all I have ever had the good fortune to encounter, and I cannot but lament that I fear I shall be unable to persuade thee to continue thy journey to Exmoor. If thou wilt I swear to thee that no undue means shall be exercised to influence thy stay, and if thy determination be then as strong as now it is to return, thou shalt have thy way, and nought be suffered to interfere with or prevent thee from fulfilling thy wish."

"You promised to restore me to my friends when the steeds were refreshed, and I claim the fulfilment of it."

"It shall be performed to the letter, if, when the time arrives, thou dost persist in thy present resolve. But I will send a messenger to thee, and I will abide by the reply you may send through him to me, whate'er it be."

"May I ask why I and my friend have been subjected to this cruel outrage?" she inquired.

"I will tell thee another time," he answered.

"Do you see that smoke arising from yonder clump of trees?" interrupted Gualtier, addressing his master.

"I do," replied Leon, "and what then?"

"There is our abiding place for a short period," he answered. "It is a snug place, and there is everything you can wish for."

In a few minutes more the party had threaded the complicated path along which they had traversed; and, as daylight was spreading over them, arrived at a small building, little more in appearance than a hut, and yet in reality possessing large accommodations; but it was so encompassed—nay, imbedded in trees, that its extent could not be discovered but by traversing the different chambers it contained. Gualtier gave a peculiar signal, which was answered from within, and then the door was unbarred: the squat, firm-built figure of a man presented itself, and Gualtier exclaimed,—

"Well, Gurtel! here are customers who need thy hospitality; but 'ware conveyers, groundlings, guineahens, lifters, and the like. Here is my master, and these are his friends, and they must be treated as kings and queens, and there must be no tongue wag more than if thou hadst no such customers, or had ever seen any such—thou dost understand?—and managing to satisfaction will be remembered."

"Alight," uttered Gurtel, in a short guttural description of voice, but with great obsequiousness of manner. "All your wishes shall be observed. I know my duty to everybody—few so well, nobody better, though I say it, and let anybody deny it if they can and if they dare: but I know they can't do one, and they'd better not do the other, though I say—"

"Thou hast said enough," exclaimed Leon, hastily, as he dismounted and assisted Violet to alight, a retainer tendering the same aid to Flora; "and favor me by giving me a proof thou'rt not all words, by leading the way for these maidens to thy best apartment, and seeing that they receive every attention. Thy wife—thou hast one, I believe?"

"I have, indeed, Chevalier. She's a rare wife—few so good, nobody better, though I say—"

"Exactly," interrupted Leon. "Let her wait upon these maidens, and show them every courtesy and respect that a liberal recompense can command."

"Princesses of the blood royal shall not meet with better treatment, though I say it; my hostel may be small, but there's few so good, none better, though I—"

Say what thou hast to say when thy task is performed," again interrupted Leon; "shew thy skill in exhibiting, among thy other good qualities, a silent tongue, and charge for it in thy bill."

"I will be as dumb as the stump of an oak without a branch or leaf upon it; I can be as mute as death if I please, few so silent, none more—"

"Thou'rt placing thy reward in jeopardy already," cried Leon, stopping him short; "summon thy wife without a word, if thou canst."

"That is to be done," exclaimed the host, and entering the door he pulled a bell. "You are early visitors," he continued, "but early or late it is all the same to me; I have entertainment for all comers at all hours, gentle and simple, noble and humble, high and lowly, lord and serf, prince and peasant."

"Gualtier, silence this chattering friend of thine," ejaculated Leon petulantly; "by the eleven thousand virgins! but his clack surpasses an army of women about to do battle with their tongues; curse me, but he must be a descendant in a right line from the Tower of Babel, and be endowed with the tongues of all his ancestors."

"Gurtel," exclaimed Gualtier, with a laugh, "no silence no money."

"Mute as a fish," ejaculated Gurtel; and to the surprise of all, uttered not another word until a question was asked of him by Leon, on the appearance of a woman with a repulsive and forbidding aspect, whose scrutiny of the guests seemed between a scowl and great disgust.

"Is that your wife?" inquired Leon, as she appeared.

"She is; and I may say—"

"No more!" checked Leon; and then addressing the hostess, he said, "Lead these maidens to your best appointed rooms; let them want for nothing which attention and kindness can supply, or their wants demand."

"They are ladies," exclaimed Gualtier, giving her a significant look, "and must be taken where they will hear or see nothing to interfere with their repose or comfort."

The woman opened her eyes as if somewhat astonished at Gualtier's words, and softening down much of her repulsiveness of manner, led Violet and Flora away. As soon as they were gone, Leon said to the host,—

"Now show me to a room, for I am immensely tired."

"Leon," exclaimed Martin suddenly, as he was just about following the host, "thou'rt offended with me, because thou dost think I have endangered thy honor; but suspend thy anger for a time, and I will so explain everything to thee, that thou shalt confess, in inciting thee to act as thou hast to-night, I have in no way compromised thy honor, or done aught to forfeit thy friendship. I ask but for a short time, until you are enabled without interruption to hear me; and if I fail to prove what I now advance to you, then cast me off as one utterly worthless, or take whatever satisfaction may seem to thee best."

"Marry! Martin," replied Leon, drily, "it seemeth plain beyond any possible demonstration to the contrary, that thou hast throughout the whole affair to-night most incontinently deceived me. However

since thou hast offered what appears fair, I will suspend the offence I feel until thou hast explained. There is my hand in proof."

Martin grasped it with an appearance of affectionate pleasure, and Leon continued,—

"But understand, Martin, I shall in no way depart from the promise I have made to Violet; she and her friend shall, while here, be unmolested, and return, if they continue in their present resolve, without even a shadow of an insult being offered to either."

"You forget the friend is my prize," observed Martin, "and it rests with me whether I permit her to depart or not."

"You are mistaken there, Martin; it was through me that she was abstracted, and I consider myself, in promising the safe return of one, bound for both, and I will be. You know, that if you persist in detaining her, there is but one appeal I can make, and that I shall certainly make if you offer to oppose her departure."

"I waive the question; do as you list with both: not that I am moved by the hint you make of an appeal to our swords, but I believe thou hast a right to do what thou hast determined, and so ends that matter: all I wish is not to quarrel."

"Nor I, if thou explainest to my satisfaction; But I am a-weary now, and would fain defer any further conference until we have both been refreshed by a long sleep. Farewell for the present. Gualtier, when thou hast seen the steeds properly cared for, attend me in the den to which this Babelite is about to consign me."

He then followed the host, who, bowing obsequiously, led him to a sleeping apartment; the moment he disappeared Martin caught Gualtier by the arm, and said to him in a voice of great eagerness—

"Thou did'st give me to understand that thou had'st slain my foe. Why did'st thou so much deceive me?"

"Deceive thee!" echoed Gualtier, "I did not; I buried my knife to the hilt in his heart. I heard him yell his death shriek, and I wiped the hot blood from my dagger, when I had cast his dead body from me."

"Thou hast slain the wrong man," replied Martin; "thou did'st hear the words read which were marked upon that strip of parchment found twisted round the hilt of the dagger with which Baldric was slain?"

"I did," answered Gualtier; "but what has that to do with thy foe?"

"As much as that they were written by him," replied Martin; "he is on our track, and we shall not escape him; I have had terrible proofs of his subtlety."

"I'd elude him if he were the devil himself," replied Gualtier; "unless he knows this spot by having visited it, I defy him to discover it; and our route from here is so completely different, and so out of the line we have hitherto come, that it would be impossible for him or anyone to track it."

"You promise well; and remember, it is in my power to reward well. If you can fulfil the promise you have just made, and succeed in performing another service successfully I shall require of you, you will find me a liberal paymaster."

"I hope the service is not a bloody one; if it is, I decline it. I am not over squeamish, but last night's work was enough to last me a long time."

"Be not alarmed, it is a very simple one. I overheard thy master say he would send a messenger to the maiden he himself bore off, to learn whether it be her pleasure to go on to Exmoor, or in spite of such offers as he may make her, to return to her friends: you will doubtless be the messenger he will employ, and whatever message he gives you, couch in such terms as to make her believe, in the event of her returning to London, she must not while on the journey allude to it; and in giving her reply to thy master, heed not what she may tell thee, but say to him that she has consented to go on to Exmoor, upon the condition that he does not refer to this change in her sentiments until after they have arrived there, on pain of her immediately retracting."

"But thy part in this trickery will very soon be discovered, and I shall be the principal sufferer without being much of a gainer," said Gualtier: "the discovery of the scheme will be followed by at least my degradation and severe punishment—perhaps death. My master is very fierce in his anger, and upon ascertaining that I had made him appear dishonorable, would in his sudden rage, think little of sending his rapier through my body."

"Never fear for such an event; I will hold you clear for my own sake; it is of the highest importance to me that the girls go to Exmoor; I care not how it is accomplished, so that they go—but go they must."

"But the journey is five days from here; if the maiden bids me say to my master she will return to London, she will soon find out by the length of time that we are not going there; speak to him about it; he will reply; and there will be—"

"That may be avoided with ease," interrupted Martin, "by telling her it will be necessary to return to London for our own safety by a different route to that we took in coming, and that it will occupy a considerably longer time; that point is met, and there are no others that I foresee to fear discovery so as to prevent the success of my plan. You will perform this service for me?"

"You will hold me free of all consequences?"

"Everything, and reward thee well."

"How about the three hundred merks? You say I slew the wrong one. I know I killed somebody; it was the one that you told me was he you wanted slain."

"You are mistaken, you must have missed him in the dark; but no matter, you shall have the money with an addition to it, for the present service."

"I am satisfied; I will do it."

"Enough; now to thy duties. If we stay longer together we may be observed by Leon, and he will probably suspect something; he will be scrupulous to a nicety while this foolish fit respecting his honor is upon him: therefore away with thee: do my bidding well, and thou shalt receive a most liberal recompense."

Gualtier and Martin then separated, Martin to seek repose—it was daylight—and Gualtier to see that the horses were properly attended to: which having done, he attended Leon, assisted him to undress, retire to his couch, and leaving him to sleep, sought the pallet destined for himself, threw himself upon it, and it was mid-day before he awoke. Having washed off all appearance of his heavy slumber, he hastened to the chamber of his master, who he was told had been inquiring for him, and when he entered he found him sitting upright in bed indulging in expressions somewhat stronger than those used in common *parlance*, indicative of great disgust at his situation. As soon as Gualtier appeared he opened upon him for having been absent so long after he had been summoned; and after venting his disturbed feelings in the utterance of a long string of names, he inquired,—

"Pray what is the character of this place unto which you have brought me?"

"The character?" echoed Gaultier, evasively.

"Aye, I have great misgivings as to its honesty; there was a vile laughing and screeching carried on by some drunken carousers when I essayed to sleep, and since that there has been a conversation carried on beneath yon window, of a tendency most knavish. Thy

speech, too, on our arrival, to the host, leads me to infer that I am in a den of thieves. Pray am I not i' the right? No equivocation, knave—speak the truth."

"You need not be alarmed, sir, you will be respected and well treated here," answered Gualtier, avoiding the question, which Leon would not permit, and pressed him so closely that he confessed it was a place where the marauders from different parts of the county round brought apparel and property, not immediately available to dispose of, which they had obtained by robbery, and for which they received about a fourth the value from the host. When he had finished his account, Leon asked, looking him hard in the face at the same time,—

"And how came you acquainted with this place?"

"I—I—oh, I discovered it by accident," returned Gualtier, confusedly; "in one of my journeys from Exmoor to London, I fell in with it; but save to bait my steed and rest myself, I had no other connection with it."

"Well, I shall be glad to get clear of it. Go thou at once to the maidens, carry my compliments to them, and say I await their decision. If they will so far do me the great kindness of accompanying me to Exmoor, they shall have no cause to repent their good nature; that I will exhaust every source of enjoyment in affording them pleasure and promoting their happiness; but if they decline my offer, say I am equally ready to—no, don't say that, but say I will keep my promise, and attend them to London as soon as they are prepared to depart."

Gualtier bowed and left the room. He sought Violet, and following Martin's suggestions, he gave her to understand, upon receiving her positive refusal to go anywhere but to the place from whence she had been taken, that his master was posessed of so peculiar a frame of temper, that although he would suffer her, according to his promise, to return, any allusion to it on their journey, or expressed doubt that he meant to perform it, originating in the length of time it might take them to get safely and undiscovered to London, would be followed by his instantly withdrawing his promise, and compelling them to follow him to Exmoor. Violet promised to obey his injunctions, as they appeared to be given in a frank, honest manner, and declared herself and Flora to be quite ready to depart. He returned to his master, and instead of delivering Violet's reply to the message he had given her, he gave the one Martin had bid him, and Leon, delighted to think she had consented, subscribed to its terms with joy; and having, by the aid of Gualtier, attired himself, he ordered out the horses, discharged the expenses, and although the host tried hard to have something to say, which he confessed he should not say, respecting the remarkable quality of everything he had served his guests with, Leon would not hear a word, thrusting him unceremoniously back once when he approached too near, with a low bow of apparently extreme politeness, but in reality to inspect the jewels which glittered in Leon's girdle, and bade him tell his wife to acquaint the maidens he awaited their presence. The host, as he went in to obey his command, laid hold of Gualtier's arm, and whispered,—

"Thy master's girdle is richly bedight with precious stones—are they real?"

"Real!" echoed Gualtier, scornfully; "d'ye suppose they're like your base light crockards with which you cheat your guests?"

"You were ever a jesting rogue," replied the host, still in a whisper, with a savage grin. "Tell me, has the plenty of money?"

"Not with him," returned Gualtier, in the same tone; "and look ye, Gurtel, no foul play. There has been some as we came here, done on the fellow we buried on our arrival. But we shall be prepared for it; and if you send any of your tribe after us, it will cost them a life or two, and you the forfeiture of all you now possess—you understand? And see you mark what I tell you. Mind me, if thou dost try to molest us, you shall smart for it."

"I molest! I send any one after guests my friends have brought to my hostel!" he exclaimed in a low tone, affecting the utmost astonishment. "You do not know me, friend Gualtier. I may not be very good; but I will say that there are few so good, and I am sure nobody better, though I say it. You don't know me—"

"Rather too well to trust thee, even with the value of a dead hound. There; away with thee, and do my master's bidding; and look that thou dost keep my counsel, for having made a promise, do not flatter thyself that, if thou playest me false, I will not perform it."

The host muttered something between his teeth, and summoning his wife, sent her to Violet and Flora with Leon's message. When the woman entered the apartment she found them ready to depart, and communicated her errand; as they were about to quit the room she suddenly checked them, and looking Violet in the face, she exclaimed,—

"Thou'rt young and fair, gentle, and very kind in thy words and manner; thou'rt very different to those who frequent this dreadful place. I was once like you, young and innocent—for I am sure thou art innocent—and almost as fair; I am not old in years, but look at the change, the appearance of wrinkled age, sorrow, care, and crime have made in me. I have been insulted and degraded, loaded with reproaches and blows, been compelled to mix in scenes and endure the company of those my heart loathed to witness; have been treated with indignity and insolence by wretches who were beyond all contempt; have borne shame and sorrow, and extremest misery, until the agony it has cost me has wrung my heart, scorched my brain, and driven me almost to madness; but I brought all on myself by a pride which sooner or later must be crushed. I sacrificed the heart and happiness of a youth who was humble in life, but who loved me truly, to be the leman of one who was wealthy, and could give me the means of gratifying an inordinate vanity; what I am now, is the consequence of the indulgence of that pride. Thou hast treated me gently and kindly, maiden, and my heart is strongly moved towards thee; I see that thou'rt alone in the company of gallants, whose specious exteriors, or whose wealth, will never compensate for the destruction of thy honor; I would have thee beware of the danger of thy position, and impress upon thee fully that the first step from virtue may lead thee, like me, to be the jest, the scoff, and what is worse, the companion of thieves and murderers, for in this den do such monsters congregate—"

"We were carried off by force," exclaimed Flora, interrupting her, "but they who took us away are going to restore us without subjecting us to any further wrong."

"Carry thee off by force, and return thee so easily!" cried the woman with surprise; "it does not seem possible."

"It is true, nevertheless," replied Violet; "one, at whose instigation I feel convinced this violence was done upon us, is great in villany; but the other, who seems to have the greatest power, has a regard for his honour, for when I appealed to it, to restore me to my friends, he consented, and pledged his word he would do so."

"I pray Heaven thou may'st not be deceived;" ejaculated the woman, and then sinking her voice to a whisper, added, "I have but a word or two to say: and will be put in execution, and I dread to think what may ensue. I overheard them planning the villanous scheme; it is known which path you are going to

bid the chevalier of whom you have just spoken look to his weapons when he has quitted here, and prepare for an attack from marauders; it has been concerted, pursue, but if the chevalier fears not to push forward at a brisk pace, and takes the first left-hand path he arrives at, he may perhaps avoid them; if he does not,

I fear no courage will avail to avert the fate intended to all. Farewell! May God preserve you! I have warned ye of your danger, I can do no more, but pray that you may escape the evils which threaten you from your own beauty, and from those who will be on your track as soon as you have departed. Remember my sad fate, and avoid it, and when thou art offering up thy prayers, remember me." She waved her hand, and pressing it hastily to her eyes, disappeared.

Violet and Flora were both considerably surprised by her singular manner, and in an equal degree alarmed at her intelligence, particularly the latter, who, but for Violet's suggestion, would have told Leon all she had heard the moment she was in his company.

"Let us get away from this terrible place safely before we utter a word," advised Violet, "or we may lose the benefit of the information we have received, by being overheard by the people who intend us the violence; and should such be the case, they would, in all probability, change their plan, and make their wicked attempt successful."

"I will be guided by you in all things, dear Violet," replied Flora; "but it seems to me that we cannot tell of this concerted scheme to rob and, perhaps, murder us, too soon; but you know best, and I will do whatever you advise. I wish we had never come to London at all—I wish Michael had never gone; but what is the use of wishing? If I had not been so weak and wicked, none of this would have happened. I have brought it all to pass—I have made those I most loved the victims of unhappiness and misery—I wish I had died before I—"

"Come, come, Flora, this is no time to think thus," interrupted Violet, observing the tears gathering fast into Flora's eyes; "We are placed in a frightful position, it is true, but the goodness of the Almighty is great; He will not desert us because that we are weak and defenceless, and are separated from all our friends; let us put our trust in Him and all will be well. Come, let us leave this place, the steeds are at the door, and if the Chevalier who has carried us off, and who has pledged his honour for our safe return, break not his word, we shall soon be in the arms of my dear foster-father."

Violet placed her arm around Flora's waist, and still urging every inducement which she thought might restore her to something like self-possession, led her from the room.

When they reached the door of the hostel they were greeted by Leon, who, with the utmost politeness and courtesy of manner, assisted each upon a steed. Flora gave no indication of the important news her tongue was teeming with, save an occasional quick glance over her shoulder to ascertain whether any of the expected thieves had begun to assemble, and wait upon their footsteps, but nothing met her eye to confirm the hostess' singular warning; she therefore jumped at once to the conclusion that they had already started and were waiting at some corner to pounce upon them the moment they arrived at it. How devoutly she wished to gain the lane which was to afford them the means of escape; and in her anxiety took notice of nothing but what might in some way, however remotely, be connected with her thoughts.

Violet, on the contrary, could not but observe the alacrity which Leon displayed, as well as the undisguised feeling of pleasure which seemed to hold possession of him. He showed her the greatest attention, and in such a manner as to indicate anything but disappointment at her intended return; indeed, once he said to her in a low tone, shortly after they had started,

"Fairest creature, I thank thee for thy present determination; it has afforded me the most intense satisfaction, which I shall, I trust, be fully able to evince and prove during and at our journey's end."

Noticing a slight change pass over Violet's features upon hearing his words, he attributed it to his having infringed upon the conditions which Gualtier had told him she had imposed upon her consent to accompany him to Exmoor; and fearing that she might be about to retract, turned his steed to Martin's side, and hastily, though somewhat against his inclination, entered into conversation with him.

Their path lay through a narrow alley, for 'twas little else, formed as though it had been cut, from sheer necessity, for a communication with some other part of the county, through one entanglement of trees, shrubs, and underwood. The daylight was half shut out by the interwoven trees on either side, and the wood itself was rugged, heavy, and full of hollow places, which made their progress along it not only difficult but tediously slow. Flora kept as close to Violet as it was possible without impeding their advance; she spoke little, but her eyes were in constant action—they were opened beyond their usual manner, and her head moved from side to side slowly, but with a steadiness which apparently enabled her eyes to bid defiance to shade, covert, copse, underwood, enwoven leaves, anything which could afford a secret hiding-place for almost the shadow of one of the marauders she had been led to expect would attack them.

Her imagination, by feverish anticipations, grew heated, and converted the footsteps of the horses they were upon to those of the villains walking, out of sight, it is true, by their sides, among the trees. Every yard they advanced, this idea was strengthened by the startling accuracy of the echo of their steps, and by the casual sough of the wind among the leaves and dry branches, making the decayed and parched twigs crackle as though they were pushed aside by some one making hasty progress through them; and the timid, alarmed girl shuddered every now and then, and looked Violet in the face, with such an expression of dismal apprehension, that although oppressed with thoughts by no means calculated to create mirth, she could not forbear smiling at her. Flora, however, did not see the occasion for jocularity, and without altering her expression of countenance, whispered to her more courageous companion, a little petulantly—

"Don't laugh, Violet; I wonder how you can find it in your heart to do it—I am frightened to death: we shall never get home alive, I'm sure of that, we shall never see anybody again. I can hear them following us every step we take: we cannot escape—we shall all be murdered, and those we love will never hear of us any more—never, never!"

"What is the matter now? what makes thee look so scared, maiden?" inquired Gualtier, observing, with some amusement, the apprehension depicted on her features, and overhearing her words. "You need not be afraid of this pathway, though it does look so very lonely; there is none here but ourselves."

"Oh yes, there is," replied Flora, hastily and earnestly.

"Where?" asked Gualtier, a little surprised at her manner. "I should be glad to know that, for I have pretty good reason to believe to the contrary. I cannot hear or see any any one, and your senses must be wondrous keen if you can; but you need give way to no alarm—we are safe enough here."

"Are we?" ejaculated Flora, with an expression which decidedly conveyed the meaning 'we are not.' Gualtier looked at her a moment, and seeing that her

anxiety was not affected, fancied there might be more in her insinuation than he at first believed; and drawing closer to her side, he exclaimed, in rather an under tone—

"What mean you? you look as if you possessed some knowledge of harm about to happen to us; tell me, is such the case? If it is, hesitate not a moment, or it may be too late to avert the danger—if danger there is any. Speak, and fear not: we are as much interested in your safety as you can be in your own; therefore be not afraid to speak."

"I must tell him," whispered Flora to Violet, looking most appealingly at her; "I must tell him—there is no use in keeping it, is there?"

"I was about to summon yon Chevalier to acquaint him," replied Violet, in some degree tinctured with the fear which so strongly possessed Flora; "it is time he should know, and there is not much danger in being overheard."

"What is all this about?" interrupted Gualtier impatiently.

Flora immediately replied by giving him a rather heightened relation of the warning and means of avoiding the premeditated evil which the woman of the hostel had, with such seeming kindness, furnished them, and looked for his movements upon hearing it with considerable anxiety. He, however, did nothing but appear thoughtful for a minute, which to Flora seemed an interminable time, and then he asked musingly,

"What made her say all this to you?"

"I don't know," replied Flora, looking at Violet as if to say 'do you?' Violet seemed to understand the look, for she returned it by saying,

"Nothing more, I believe, than sympathy for our situation."

"Sympathy for your situation!" echoed Gualtier, "you acquainted her then that you were not of our party by your own consent?"

"Yes!" replied Flora immediately.

"Now I understand why she told the tale," muttered Gualtier, and then said loud, "there is much that is not to be despised in what you have told me, but be not alarmed, I will disappoint the knaves in their scheme." He then rode up to the Chevalier Leon, and said, observing the customary respectful salutation, which in all his speeches and actions he never forgot or slighted.

"The house we have just quitted, you are aware, was not filled with saints."

"I have a strong conviction that way, certainly," replied Leon. "If they were, I have been horridly mistaken in my notions of Heaven. To what does thy speech tend? Thy countenance looks so big and important, I should not feel greatly surprised if thou didst tell me that our host was the veritable Saint Julian—or, at least, some canonized martyr.

"More likely the foul fiend, in the disguise of a Flemishing-looking thief," returned Gualtier bitterly; "but devil or no devil, I make him remember playing his rascally tricks on me, and those for whose safety I was, as I told him, responsible."

"What hast thou to say, Gualtier, about him?" said Leon; "not to tell us that he is a rogue in grain, for that is easy to be seen by his countenance; or that his house is grievously infested by rascals of all degrees in villany, for a quick ear would speedily discover that."

"No; but that in defiance of a certain rule established by those who frequent his house he has put a set of hungry wolves on our heels; and if we are not expeditious we shall be surrounded, lose everything we now possess, if not life also."

"Are you certain of this?" asked Martin. "How did you obtain your information?"

"His wife told an old tale which I am acquainted with, to decoy us into a certain place, in order that we might be more easily destroyed," returned Gualtier. "By pretending a sympathy for your situation in the fate designed you, and giving a species of advice how to avoid it, she leads you into a trap from which nothing can rescue you."

"To whom was this tale told?" inquired Leon.

"To one or both of these maidens," returned Gualtier, "and by one of them to me. There is only one thing to be done, that is, to keep on our road, and though I know we shall be encountered, yet I have an idea it will only be by a few, we can, without much difficulty, dash through and get clear of them as soon as they appear. It is as well, however, to be prepared for the worst. I would advise you, therefore, to look to your weapons, and follow me as quickly as you can; the sooner we get away from this labyrinth the better."

"So I have for some time thought," exclaimed Leon, examining his sword, "and it would have been far better if you had not taken us to that den at all. You will remember it was of your own choosing, for its extra security, and a pretty infernal receptacle of rascality it has proved. I overheard enough to satisfy me completely as to the nature of its frequenters, and hesitate not to tell you, you must give me some better explanation of your connexion with them than you have yet, before I am assured that I have not all along been mightily mistaken in you."

"I can explain that easily, but another time will do I hope," uttered Gualtier hastily. "I took you there with the best intention; if it has not turned out as I could wish, I am not to blame. However, this is no time for such regrets: if we are in the trap, we must do what we can to get out of it, and once safe out, and I have a chance of getting back here again, I will rather astonish him who set it for us. A little further on the road, becomes yet narrower and darker, it is there we may expect to be waylaid: but I fancy if we go up there at a gentle pace, and as soon as we arrive at it spur through at full speed, we shall throw our assailants off, for the road a few hundred yards further widens considerably, and will enable us to keep our pace until too far for them to overtake us."

"Away with thee, and give us a better proof of thy cunning than the last," said Leon, rather sternly; "thou hast got us into the jaws of the wild beasts, and thou must get us out of them again."

Gualtier said not a word in reply, but rode forward, followed by Leon and Martin. When he reached Violet, he said—

"Thou wilt not be afraid to urge thy horse to the top of his speed, or sit him when he is so."

"No," replied Violet, "if there is a necessity for it."

"Nor I," replied Flora, speaking with all her heart. "I have ridden one of my own at full gallop over one of our bostels, and I know I shall not be afraid to make this horse fly, if I was to be pursued by robbers."

"Gallantly said," exclaimed Leon; "we shall try thy courage shortly."

"Oh, I've not the least courage in the world," she cried, quickly; "I shall be too frightened of those who may be after me to think about the danger of riding a horse at the top of his speed, if you mean to try my courage that way; but in any other fashion I am the most timid creature in existence, therefore do not count upon any aid from me except screams."

"You have a talent that way, I can vouch," mut-

tered Gualtier, and raising his voice, instantly, he exclaimed to them—

"Keep as close after me as you can, and when you see me clap my spurs to my speed, do you the like, and no matter how hard the pace I may ride, or whatever may spring up to intercept you, pause at nothing; keep on until I advise you to slacken your speed."

They all promised to obey him, particularly Flora, who kept nervously close behind him, resolving that whoever, except Violet, was lost, she would not be the one.

They rode on after this in silence, and discovered, as Gualtier had told them, that the path grew more intricate every step they took; until, at length, instead of riding two or three abreast, they were compelled to advance singly, a mode of progression which did not suit Flora's idea of safety at all. However, the narrowness of the path compelled them to adopt it, and she pursued her way with a horrible imagining that it was but the forerunner of devastation and death.

If any of the party had been indifferent, incautious, or careless of the necessary watchfulness her forebodings created, the quick eye of an Indian could not have penetrated the deeply shadowed spots with a closer scrutiny than she surveyed them, expecting every instant that she would see some black-faced, ill-looking, blood-thirsty villain start up, and with weapons which carried nothing less than death in their very aspect, rush at them, and inflict upon them horrors unimaginable.

Her heart beat and throbbed loud and fast, her throat swelled and pained with excitement, and she prayed most heartily, every inch they advanced, that the next would be the last of the lonely, drear, frightfully solitary lane they were passing through.

She rode immediately behind Gualtier; indeed, frequently her horse's head was level with his saddle, and though she said nothing, she wondered mightily what on earth could make the man so mad, so foolhardy, as to ride at the snail's pace into which her impatience converted a tolerably fast trot. Gualtier, however, knew his task well, and advanced with an affected composure, and an appearance of ease and carelessness, as if quite unsuspicious that he was anticipating a visit from a party of "lifters," who thought nothing of murder if it became necessary to ensure their obtaining the possession of gold. He, however, did not lose sight of an object which might indicate the proximity of the knaves, and was quite prepared for whatever might ensue.

They arrived at the "first-left-hand path" to Flora's great delight, a feeling which was instantly changed to alarm and wonder on observing Gualtier pass it without taking any notice of it. The matter was too important for her to let him do this and keep silence, she therefore reined up her steed as she reached it, and called to him in a loud quick whisper—

"Hist! you are going wrong; this is the turning; quick, down here; the woman told us this was our only chance of escape; make haste, or we shall be caught. Oh! for Heaven's sake! come back, or we shall all be lost."

Gualtier put up his finger, as though to caution her to silence, and returned in the same tone, as well as quite emphatically,

"That woman is an infernal, lying old beldame, there is no thoroughfare down there. I know the place well; before we could get half-way down we should be up to the saddle-girths in slush, have no room to turn, and stand like lambs to be slaughtered, without the power to help ourselves: say not a word more, keep your horse well by the head, and be ready the moment I cry 'away!' to make after me as hard as you can gallop."

He resumed the trot which he had checked to converse with her, and the next instant, half convinced that he was right, and half inclining to the woman's story, Flora put her horse's head to its old place, close by the saddle which Gualtier bestrode.

The anticipated approach of danger, whose extent is unknown, will make the heart of the bravest man beat quick, if not exactly with apprehension, at least with an excitement which approaches very nearly to it. He who surrounded by many hazards, each of which are calculated to involve a life, may look upon them coolly and act with a firmness and steadiness which sets everything like fear at nought, because he *knows the risk;* yet in expectation of the occurrence of a strait whose danger he is unable to measure, because it has not arrived, he will be nervous, and apprehensive to a degree, which, if it comes not under the denomination of actual fright, is so closely allied to it as to exhibit the same symptoms, and produce, until the moment of action really arrives, the same result. In the present instance there was not, perhaps, one in the little party, save the females, who would have, in the greatest position of known danger, shown the slightest act of cowardice, yet in their progress through this path of

> "Gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
> Where no man went,"

there was an instinctive dread, a shrinking from what was to come, which in brave men seemed paradoxical. They were all anxious—aye, as anxious as Flora, to get clear of this narrow tree-embedded lane; there was no room for action, and the very idea of being fettered in their means of self-defence, when they were unacquainted to what extent they would be called upon, was enough to render them nervously desirous of getting out of it as speedily as possible.

They kept on steadily, a little faster than Gualtier had advised, but anxiety had induced that, and perceived without any relief to their apprehension, that the way grew more wild and complex—more entangled and rugged than anything they had hitherto encountered; their progress was rendered much slower, the horses with difficulty maintaining their footing in the deep sloughs formed at different periods by heavy rains, incessant drippings of dew from the leaves, and constant damp. The trees stretched across the road, inter-twining and keeping out the day-light; briars, brakes, and underwood of all descriptions grew profusely in every direction, and had it not been that there was occasionally the print of a horse's hoof in the soft earth, it would have been difficult to believe that its intricacies had ever been trodden by human foot before.

There existed in the breasts of all a depression, and in all an equal desire to be relieved from it. In Violet and Flora there was but the one wish of escaping, without even seeing the marauders; and on the part of the men to know whom they had to grapple with, and room for their exertions when they did.

They had now ridden some distance, and still there was little or no change in the scenery. If there was any it was for the worse, and by the time they had reached the dreariest place they had yet encountered, Leon began to have some doubts of the integrity of Gualtier. His connexion with the people who kept this den of ruffians; his confusion when charged with it, accompanied by his evident desire to evade any question concerning it, and his cold-blooded remark respecting Flora, all struck him as being facts singularly inimical to his honour or honesty, and he

resolved to have some explanation before he suffered himself to be led further through this serpentine entanglement of branches and leaves, perhaps into the hands of ruffians without the smallest chance of escape; he therefore begged Violet, behind whom he was riding, to allow him to pass her, an act that was with some difficulty accomplished, and the same with Flora, who, to the difficulty, added a little unwillingness, and then he begged Gualtier to stop, which he immediately obeyed. He then exclaimed—

"I have suffered you to lead the way since we quitted London, to bring us to a hostel which you have confessed to have been the assembling-place of a band of thieves and cut-throats, with whom, to my surprise I acknowledge, you appear to have connection, seeing that from the time you were at an early age brought from Normandy you have been in my family. You are now leading us through a horrible, solitary, infernal cut-throat-looking glen; and what assurance have I that you are not playing me false?"

"Playing you false!" echoed Gualtier, in unmitigated astonishment; "what should make you entertain such a thought?"

"The singularity of thy conduct," replied Leon. "I have while on this adventure witnessed less principle, less disposition to be the honest fellow I have hitherto conceived you to be, and everything has, since we have been out of the high road, been so suspicious and mysterious, that unless you give me a strong reason for believing my present notion mistaken, I will not advance another step. If my surmises respecting thee prove correct, thou shalt not escape. My first effort for vengeance shall be directed upon you, and it shall go hard but I repay thy villany in full."

"You are, indeed, much mistaken," returned Gualtier, with the blood burning in his face; "I am not aware of having given you any cause for your suspicions; you wished to be brought an unfrequented way, and I have brought you one. I cannot help, nor am I to blame for what has occurred. I can only say this, you never yet had cause to doubt me. Whatever my conduct to others, it has been honest and upright to you. I do not forget that your father brought me, a miserable, starving orphan from Normandy—that he fed and clothed me, and treated me kindly, or that since I have served you I have ever received from you anything but the greatest consideration and kindness—I will never forget it. I beg of you to trust me; I will not deceive you, I swear by all that is holy; and if, when you find us attacked, I do not try everything to get the whole of the party clear, or defend you, and sell my life in your behalf dearly, why be thou the first to cut me piecemeal."

"You speak fair," exclaimed Leon; "but were I to trust you, and you played me false, it would be poor satisfaction to cut thee down, when, in not trusting thee, I might spare the necessity by avoiding the impending danger."

"You cannot avoid it," returned Gualtier; "to return would, if not impracticable, be dropping into the arms of a far greater danger than we are likely to encounter in advancing: the number ot thieves behind are more than six times the number of those in front, and more desperate, because it is not anticipated we shall pass this way; but go, as the host's wife directed, down Hartel's Snare, and the strongest force will be there posted; while at the Owl's-pass, which is not far from this, a few only will be placed to give notice to the others if we come this way, and they will all as soon as possible be after us, until we get clear of this wood, which extends at least three miles beyond the Owl's-pass, and then suddenly terminates upon a moor of a few miles long, both bleak and barren, but affords good footing for our steeds, and over which we can go at a pace which will defy all pursuit from the knaves on foot. I beg of you to trust me. I swear to you by my dear mother, who, God rest her soul! is in Heaven—an oath which I never broke—that I will be true to you, or may my soul be consigned to everlasting perdition!"

"Well, if I trust thee," returned Leon, "I will ride close to thee, and if thou dost betray me thou shalt not live long to enjoy thy triumph."

"If I shew the slightest indication of treachery hew me down without mercy," exclaimed Gualtier, energetically.

"I will," replied Leon. "How far is this Owl's-pass?"

"About a quarter of a mile," answered Gualtier.

"Very well," said Leon; "lead on, I will trust thee, and if thou dost deceive me thou wilt be the most ungrateful as well as treacherous villain the world e'er took count of."

"As I prove and have proved, so judge me," said Gualtier. He dug his spurs into the flanks of his horse, and once more led the way, closely followed by Leon, with his sword drawn, and ready for instant use. Flora took up as nearly as possible the same position with him that she had with Gualtier; she had fresh cause for alarm, having overheard the conversation, and her fears in consequence increased. She had previously had implicit confidence in Gualtier, although he had behaved so roughly to her at first, but she attributed that, and rightly too, to being over zealous in his master's cause; and his after attentions, through Leon's command to that effect, had contributed in a great degree to banish the dislike which she had naturally at first conceived for him. Knowing that all the way hitherto he had been leader, and believing that his safety was as much involved in the attack of the robbers as her own, she looked to him as the principal medium through which their escape was to be accomplished, and with that idea had kept to him as close as she could; but now that Leon's suspicions had invalidated the soundness of his faithfulness, she found the chief hope to which she had clung in this strait slipping through her fingers; between the belief that the woman might have uttered falsehoods, and Gualtier might also prove treacherous she had nothing to lay hold of which would prove to her a buoy to support her through the danger; and although she kept as near to Leon as she had to Gualtier, it was not with the same amount of hope that she was following one who, in all probability, would preserve her against the approaching evil.

Violet followed after her, filled with sad thoughts and apprehensions, endeavouring to find strength and council from fervent prayers, and putting her trust in Him who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." She already felt the full amount of the evil of her position in being torn thus rudely, and for the vilest of shameful purposes, from those who were as parents to her. The attack of thieves bringing death with it could add little to its danger, save in the event of Leon's keeping his promise, which so long as Martin Du Bois was his friend and companion, seemed a matter in the highest degree doubtful to her; still she hoped that he would, and as the appeal to his honor had met with such success, she determined that if any indication appeared of his forfeiting his word, she would not hesitate to remind him in earnest language that he had pledged his honor, and unless he broke through all ties which kept a man's name and fame unsullied he would adhere to his promise.

In addition to the thoughts respecting her own

fate, others equally sad arose in connection with Wat—dear Wat, the best, the kindest, most affectionate, beloved being under heaven! She knew ere this he had been in a murderous battle—knew his high chivalric daring—knew that where danger was thickest there he would press—that, for her sake he would strive to distinguish himself above all others, would endeavour to accomplish feats which would daunt the bravest men to attempt; and what was there but a frail hope to cling to, that, young and inexperienced as he was, throwing himself into the heart of the deadly conflict, he had not been slain?

She felt as though she could weep at the bare thought, independent of her own situation, and her prayers and aspirations were offered up more frequently and more fervently for his safety than her own. It was, perhaps, dwelling much upon these thoughts which robbed the expected interception of much of its terror, and her mind being full of sad thoughts previously, was unable to receive the strong impression which, at another time, and under different influences, would have been created.

She followed Flora, certainly not with the nervous anxiety which the latter displayed in keeping close to Leon, but with a portion of it, which was rendered by previous impressions of less force than it really appeared. Martin Du Bois, unacquainted with the different feelings which filled her bosom with anguish, and gave to her so strong an appearance of despondency, attributed its effects to her apprehension of what was about to happen, and edging his horse a little closer, he leaned forward and muttered—

"Be not alarmed, fair Violet, no harm shall come to you while I have strength to wield a weapon. Fear not, whatever your position; despite appearances, you will find a friend in me."

Violet shuddered, and endeavoured, by increasing the speed of her steed, to get farther from him whose breath, even, to her seemed to have the blighting effects of a pestilential wind; he, however, nothing daunted, increased his pace also, and continued—

"You look upon me with fear—remove it at once. You, of all persons in the world, have no cause to fear me. And if, after we escape from the knaves who are likely to attack us, you should be placed in any situation which renders the strong arm of one devoted to you necessary, hesitate not to call on me for that aid, and I swear you shall have it to the death."

Violet returned him no answer, but pressed on her steed as well as she was able, communicating an impetus to Flora's horse, which she was nothing loth to take advantage of; it had the effect of forcing on Leon, and eventually Gualtier, who found himself on the trot, without at first being able to divine the cause; and he was about to turn round to request Leon not to increase his speed until the moment it was necessary, when they were all startled by a loud scream from Flora, who immediately afterwards shrieked out at the top of her voice, as she pointed to a thick clump of underwood nearly level with Gualtier,—

"Look there! look there! Oh, heaven have mercy upon us, and keep us from all harm! I saw a man's head bob up there and then bob down again. Oh, Violet, we shall all be murdered! Oh, Heaven preserve us!"

Gualtier waited but to see her point to the underwood, and the next instant dashed his horse among it; a fellow sprung up instantly, and was as instantly cut down by a terrific blow of Gualtier's riding-whip; half-a-dozen other fellows instantly darted out from separate lurking-places, and then Gualtier shouted energetically, as he stuck his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed on,—

"Away! follow me; whip and spur, whip and spur; speed! speed!"

Leon, who had wheeled his horse to attack the fellows who had thus suddenly appeared, was nearly ridden down by Flora, who, obeying Gualtier's advice, put her horse on the instant to full gallop, and shrieking for Violet to follow her, proved herself an excellent horseman, by the masterly manner in which she put her horse to the pace and kept her seat.

Violet did follow her, and at a speed no less than her own, shewing that she, too, could ride at a desperate rate, with perfect self-possession and command of her horse.

Leon, who had been compelled to almost embed himself and steed among the underwood, to allow Flora and Violet to pass, observing Martin preparing to follow Violet, leaped his horse, with a sharp dig of his spurs, over the brushwood, and nearly overthrowing Martin, with whom he came in contact, got before him, and prevented him putting his intention into execution.

Martin ground his teeth in an ungovernable fit of rage, and swore a bitter oath he would be revenged upon him; he recovered the shock just as he received a tremendous blow upon the shoulders which nearly drove the breath from his body, from an immense clod of earth, flung at him by one of the thieves, which he repaid, as the man immediately after sprung to the bridle, and grasped a firm hold of it, by inflicting a terrific gash on the side of his face with his sword, which he had drawn immediately he heard Flora's scream; the wounded wretch shrieked with agony, and put up both his hands. Martin spurred his horse hard immediately, and was after the Chevalier as fast as he could make his steed carry him, and the retainers, not sorry to imitate his example, brought up the rear.

A shrill cry was raised by one of the men they had left behind; they heard it caught up by several voices and repeated in various parts of the wood, then there was a general shout: it was soon after repeated, and then for a moment all was silent; presently it burst forth again, louder than before, and more immediately in their rear.

"The knaves have joined company," roared Gualtier, "and can make a short cut across the wood to intercept us, unless we pass the spot before they can reach it. Follow on! spare nor whip nor spur."

He set the example by spurring his own beast until it snorted with pain, and dashed forward regardless of every obstacle. Flora, animated by the hope that they could pass the spot where they might be intercepted, before it could be gained, urged on her steed with her voice and every other means in her power, and the noble animal, as if conscious of the necessity for speed, flew along without the application of whip or spur, Flora being supplied with neither. In the excitement of the moment she forgot everything but flight, and in one of her most energetic appeals by voice to her horse, urging him forward, Gualtier turned round, struck by her animation and fearless riding, and cried out,—

"Right bravely done, maiden—gallantly manèged; keep him at that pace, and we shall escape the rascals yet."

Still unconscious of the almost masculine part she was playing, she was not disconcerted by Gualtier's remark, but plied her task as unremittingly as before: the idea of escaping the rascals was the sole one that possessed her, and if she was unfortunate enough not to succeed, it arose from no fault on her part.

The shouts of the marauders sounded loudly in their ears, and it was easy to discover they were crossing the wood to a wind in the road by a much shorter path than the fugitives could take, by the sounds of the

voices as they arose from a part of the wood, which, notwithstanding the speed they had used, was nearly on a level with themselves; the road which was rugged and uneven, and had been miserably narrow, at length began to widen and grow less rough, and their progress in consequence became swifter and easier to themselves as well as to their horses.

Flora, who had hung close upon the heels of Gualtier, now finding that there was now room for two to ride abreast, gave her steed his head, and in less than a minute was riding what might be termed a neck-and-neck race with him. He did not offer to check her, and indulged in a smile as he saw the serious anxiety of her countenance as she ever and anon inspected his features with a close scrutiny, to see if she could draw from its expression a prophecy of what was to come; again and again he looked at her, for as the way grew wider it grew lighter, and as he gazed upon her pretty face flushed with her exercise no less than with her anxiety, her long fair hair partly disengaged from her loose capuchon, and waving in the wind in most admired disorder, he thought she was the prettiest creature he had ever seen, and then it crossed his mind that she was destined to be the prey of Martin du Bois—that he was assisting in bringing the villany about, the full force of which struck him on the instant, and he as instantly, unconsciously, uttered loudly, striking the pommel of his saddle with his fist,—

"I'm damned if she shall."

"What did you say?" enquired Flora, eagerly, not, fortunately, catching his words.

"I—I—that is—I say that your steed is worthy an emperor," he replied, confusedly; "it is the best piece of horse-flesh I have ever seen. Don't you see how easily he keeps pace with this beast, who I am obliged to spur and whip to make him keep to his work? He's a noble beast, truly, don't you think so?"

"He goes very fast," she replied. "But do you think we shall be able to escape and get safe to London?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, quickly, and then raising his finger to silence her, whispered—"Say nothing about London yet; we shall have to go a roundabout way there, which will take us a long while; we shall get there, never fear, all safely; but if you talk to the chevalier, my master, he will put a stop to it all. You remember the agreement?"

"I will be silent," returned Flora, "but pray, for Heaven's sake, take us there as quick as you can. I shall never be able to live through such another day as this."

"Trust to me, and I will be a friend you little dream of having so near at hand," replied Gualtier, and then waved his hand as if to repress further conversation.

Flora did not exactly understand what he meant, but she was glad to hear that he would be a friend; while his meaning in being "a friend she little dreamed of," was to offer himself as her husband; certainly a friend she little dreamed of, and one, if he had known all, he would have seen had as little chance of being accepted in that light as she could dream of having the offer. He was suddenly and fiercely smitten with her, and as suddenly determined that Martin du Bois should be defeated in his intention. He was conscious that he stood no chance to gain her good graces but by offering her marriage, and he calculated he could do that very well by the receipt of at least three hundred merks from Martin, and, perhaps, a present from his master.

He could perceive it would be necessary to dissemble to Martin until he got his money, but when that was obtained he could, without caring for the result, throw off the mask and carry off Flora triumphantly; at least that was his expectation, and he determined that no one should touch or harm her before he got his money. He felt annoyed that he had committed the murder the night previous, because it might have been one of her intimate friends, perhaps a relation, and he felt that it would certainly be a little disagreeable to marry into a family after having murdered, perhaps, one of the principal members of it; however, it was done, and if he kept his own counsel, it would never be known who had done the deed, being quite satisfied that Martin du Bois, for his own sake, dared not tell. He had not much time to think of the matter now, nor was it exactly a favourable opportunity; however, he determined he would not lose sight of the subject or time in putting it into practice.

The shouts of the pursuers abated nothing in energy, and very little in proximity; but if they were to be defeated in their lawless projects by speed only, it is but justice to say that the fugitives threw no chance away. As the lane grew wider and better, they urged on their steeds in proportion, and at length, turning round a sudden wind of the road, they saw that it extended nearly straight before them better than half a mile. Directly they had commenced it, Gualtier cried out, loud enough to be heard by all,—

"Now for the tug!—now you must put out your best strength and courage. At the bottom of this road we may expect to meet them, if they get there before us; but, at all events, be prepared for a sudden turn of the road to the left, across which lies several trunks of trees to bar the passage, but they are easily leaped, and once clear of them, I defy the 'lifters' to catch us. Hurra! on with you, the road is wide enough and good enough to rattle over at the fastest pace the beasts can go. Whip and spur!—aha, shout away, you thieving hounds!" he continued, as a fresh yell rose on the air; "we are too far in advance of ye; ye'll never catch us, you dogs. Can you leap?" he inquired suddenly of Flora.

"I have leaped my horse over some very high brushwood when at Brenchley," replied Flora, resolved not to lose the chance of an escape even for a high leap.

"That's well," he returned. "This barrier of fallen trees is only breast high; either put your horse to it at once or breast him at it, whichever you have been used to; don't be at all afraid, your beast will clear anything, even a cathedral if it was in his way. Can your sister, or relation, or friend, or whatever she is, leap too?"

"She is a much better horsewoman than I am," answered Flora. "Wat Tyler taught her, and there was nobody in the village could ride like Wat Tyler."

"Wat Tyler! Who was he," asked Gualtier.

"He was the pride of our village," replied Flora. "He could do anything, or everything better than any body else in the village; and Michael Rycheart was next to him."

"Oh!" returned Gualtier, without having heard her reply, his attention being suddenly engrossed by fancying he observed a man shew himself suddenly at the distant wind of the road, and then disappear immediately.

"There could never have been a party of knaves stationed there," he muttered, "if there has, we are done for!" He strained his eyes eagerly to catch another glimpse of the man he fancied he had seen, or any one else. Flora watched him, and traced instantly that something disagreeable had occurred; imagined at once all sorts of frightful things, and in a tone of

alarm inquired of him, notwithstanding the intentness with which she saw he was regarding the point of road before him—

"What has happened? Our escape is surely not cut off?"

"I hope not," he replied laconically. Flora felt a cold thrill run through her veins as she heard his reply, and repeated faintly,

"You hope not! but are you not sure?"

"We cannot be sure of anything but death," was his philosophical reply; "but if you follow my directions, we may almost make sure of getting away, even if the whole nest of rascals are round the corner. Mark me! the barrier is almost immediately round the corner, keep your horse at his pace, dash at it and clear it at once, wait for nothing. You see we are near the place, encourage your beast, keep his head well up, let him see it, and over with you."

Flora promised to obey him, and turning round to Violet, who followed very closely after her, she communicated his advice to her, which she, being perfectly mistress of the manège, saw no difficulty in following. It was very evident that there would be a close run on both sides for the barrier. The cut across the wood to it was so considerably shorter than the sinuous road, that it was apparent, unless a speed was employed which even practised horsemen were not accustomed to, or felt easy in using, the thieves must be first there.

Their shouts sounded now so very close, and so clearly in advance of them, that none but Gualtier had a hope they would be the first to gain it; he, however, knew the ground, and knew that if they were not there actually first, it would be tantamount to a dead heat. He calculated upon one small advantage, that of the road bearing a little to the left, which, as the marauders were coming from the right, was just a point gained in the long run, and that was all. However, even a small point in the present case was desirable, and Gualtier knew the difference of a second would produce the escape or capture, and in endeavouring to make the most of the trifle in his favour, strongly hoped to make his escape good.

He was well aware who were after him, and knew perfectly that the least check would be fatal, for despite of the most resolute bravery, they must be overpowered by numbers. He calculated that at least thirty were chasing them, and knew too well their remorseless nature not to expect the most frightful consequences to follow the capture.

They now approached the wind of the road very fast, another minute or so would decide the matter. Gualtier prepared for the leap, and at the same time cautioned Flora to do the same; and just as they were at the corner he cried out in the voice of a Stentor—

"Wait for nothing—dash at the barrier—clear it at once, and bury your spurs in your horse's flanks—it is our only chance!"

The next instant they were round the turn. Immediately before them were piled the trunks of trees, brushwood, &c., making, unless by a dashing leap, an impassable barrier.

With a loud cry of encouragement to his steed, Gualtier put him to it; it flew over, but when it alighted on the ground it stumbled and fell.

Flora, almost at the same instant, came over with a flying leap, not only beautifully clearing the barrier, but fortunately both Gualtier and his horse, which, by a tremendous exertion on the part of both, succeeded in gaining its feet, and scouring after Flora, who was dashing a-head at what is by sportsmen termed a slapping pace. His horse was barely on its legs, ere Violet was also over, followed nearly at the same moment by Leon and Martin. The retainers, by no means deficient in courage, yet rendered nervous in the first instance by the mere act of flight, and, secondly, by a full appreciation of the consequences of being left behind, and caught by these slight remove from devils who were pursuing them, determined not to be captured if they could help it, came over the barrier together, very nearly throwing each other down, and quite as nearly alighting upon Leon and Martin, who immediately preceded them—so immediately, that to a spectator it would have seemed as though the whole four made the leap together. They were not away when the thieves came leaping and bounding through the bushes, which they crashed and tore aside as they advanced, and uttered a fierce yell of disappointment at being thus distanced by a few seconds, for no greater lapse of time occurred between Gualtier's leap and their arrival.

They dashed at Martin, Leon, and the retainers, but, thanks to their good steeds, without being able to lay hold of them, for they just galloped forward as the knaves sprang into the road to seize them; they did not give up the chase, but followed like a pack of wolves, howling, yelling, and almost licking their chops in anticipation that something would turn up which would yet place the fugitives in their power.

They had between three and four miles yet to get over before they reached the moor of which Gualtier had spoken, and if the road proved as good in advance of them as it was now, and they were not intercepted, they had little doubt but they should be enabled to get away easily and safely.

Flora's steed was a matchless one; he flew along, defying all Gualtier's attempts to overtake him, seemingly proud of the burden he was so gallantly and swiftly bearing, and determined to suffer nothing of his own species to overtake him. Flora kept her seat admirably, and made no effort to check his speed, nor would she had he gone twice as fast.

The yells of the ruffians in the rear were strong inducements for her to keep her pace; and as she occasionally turned her head and saw Gualtier and Violet some distance—not very great, it is true, but still sufficient for her to take particular notice of it—she could not help imagining that they were recklessly slow in their progress, and possessed not the proper sense of safety which it was essential for their preservation they should have.

She beckoned them impatiently to come faster, but it was a matter not to be accomplished, and Gualtier called to her to slacken her speed, in order that they might overtake her, which, although she esteemed it a most unreasonable proposal, she complied with; and when they had overtaken her—an act which her horse unwillingly permitted—she enquired what made them so slow.

"Were we mounted on such steeds as thine," replied Gualtier, "you might well ask the question; but I doubt if his equal exists in the world; I never saw the leap he made but now equalled, or even approached, nor ever saw I female, woman or maiden, accomplish one so gallantly as thou didst. Talk about being without courage, many a brave fellow would have hesitated to have taken it, and many a dashing rider not have kept his seat anything like so firmly and so well."

"Gualtier, push on, man," cried Leon, suddenly, "the villains are sending bolts like hail after us; push on, get us out of this haunt of scoundrels as quick as thou canst."

"We shall be clear of it in another quarter of an hour," replied Gualtier, "but they have not any

hance now of catching us; there is nothing to ear——"

He was here suddenly interrupted by receiving on the back of the head a blow from a bolt, which, fortunately, was almost spent ere it reached its destination, but came *quite hard enough* to nearly stun him. He uttered a round of fierce oaths in the moment of rage and pain, and Leon said, with a laugh which he could not suppress, and which did not tend to alleviate the smart or the passion Gualtier felt, "Thou seest and feelest there is some cause to fear. These missives have been flying about us like hail-

stones, but, fortunately, without hitting or hurting any of us. Had they been discharged with anything of the precision with which the far-famed Robin Hood and his men sent their bolts, we should all ere this have been food for worms."

"It was lucky it was a spent bolt," uttered Gualtier, rubbing the sore part with a kind of rueful expression of countenance, "but they've done their worst—now we're out of their reach; but the gallows-bird who set them on is not out of mine, and he shall find it out too; for may I be foiled by the devil in my dearest projects! but I'll make him smart most tremendously for his treachery. There's faith among lifters—they are proud all to keep it; but he has broken it, and he shall have the full punishment of his rascality."

"An' thou canst catch the knave," exclaimed Leon, "and can treat him to a swing from one of the boughs of any of these trees, I don't mind treating thee with a hundred merks—the more especially if you get us well out of this scrape."

"I'll do't—I'll do't, or my name is not what it is," cried Gualtier eagerly, and muttered to himself, "that will make four hundred certain; she's sure to be mine now."

Was she!

The bolts which the thieves had discharged from cross-bows now fell only at intervals, and without reaching any of the party. The retainers, who had all along formed the rear, had received several hard knocks, but none which might be deemed serious. They now, however, were extremely glad to make known that they were considerably beyond the reach of the bolts, and all the members of the party could hear that the yells and shouts of the pursuers grew each moment fainter; they therefore hugged themselves in the anticipation that the danger was passed away, until entering a new turning which the road, still sinuous, took, they saw a band of about a dozen stalwart, grim-looking fellows, drawn up to oppose them. Immediately the party appeared the fellows raised a shout and gave breath to a loud shrill whistle, as a signal to those who were following that they were about to intercept the fugitives. They were all startled by the sight, and Flora, who had hitherto kept a little in advance, reined in her steed and gave up the honour to Gualtier, with a precipitation which did little to support the praises of her courage, so liberally bestowed upon her by him. A glance, quick but searching, showed Gualtier that their opposers were armed only with swords and spears; he therefore explained, with a contemptuous laugh, in answer to a hasty inquiry from Leon of what was to be done.

"We need not trouble ourselves much—a score of such knaves would not put me out of the way, if it were not for the maidens. All we have to do is to keep on at a good pace, surround these damsels, and ride through the rascals, or over them if they get knocked down. They cannot harm us; there's no fear of that, and another mile will see us clear of the wood."

The advice of Gualtier was followed. He led the way with the thong of his riding whip twisted round the wrist of his right arm, and the handle in his hand ready to deal the first fellow he encountered as hard a knock as he had strength to give. Martin rode by the side of Flora; Leon by that of Violet, and the retainers, as usual, brought up the rear. The change of position was effected with the loss of little time, and they dashed forward to force their way through the line of knaves drawn across the wood to intercept their progress. Both Flora and Violet were much *alarmed*, but the men, with their swords drawn, and held so as to be employed to good purpose, as soon as they were wanted, rode on, somewhat excited, but in no other way affected.

The thieves saw them coming at full speed, and gave utterance to oaths, yells, and expressions of their intentions, commingled in coarse and boisterous profusion, in order to intimidate and check the progress of those of whom they hoped to make a good prey, and whom it took them little shrewdness to guess were escaping from the pretty large number of their fraternity. But their shouts and exclamations had not the desired effect, for the party still advanced, and instead of a checked, at, if possible, an increased speed.

As they drew near, Gualtier flourished his whip in the air, and upon reaching them he wheeled his horse dexterously from the fellow who expected to encounter him, and dealt one, who was getting ready to attack Leon, such a tremendous blow with the butt-end of his whip, that he felled him to the ground as if he had been struck down by a shot. Martin du Bois also cut down him who had expected to attack Gualtier, and thus an opening was made, through which Flora and Violet dashed, followed by the retainers, who made blows right and left, but without much effect, and the next instant they were whirled beyond their reach.

They, like their fraternity left far behind, joined in pursuit, shouting out their vows of vengeance and their villanous purposes, but without having at present the least chance of putting their threats into execution. They were no sooner left behind, than Flora, with the old eagerness to get out of their clutches, gave the rein to her steed, and he, impatient of being third or second in advance, quickly resumed his old station of being first.

Gualtier, with right good earnestness, whipped his steed to keep up with her, but without being so successful as he could wish; for no sooner did his horse's head get level with the flank of Flora's steed, than it gave a bound, and placed the distance it had before obtained between them.

The mile which separated them from the moor was soon passed over, and they emerged on to a long heath, as barren of trees as the wood had been crowded with them; it extended several miles, and there appeared upon it not a vestige of a human dwelling, or anything which could indicate the proximity of one: they were, however, too glad to get out of the wood to quarrel with the barrenness of this waste, and as they had soft green turf of the very finest grass to gallop over, there was little to complain of; they were well satisfied that their pursuers must be nimble to a very great degree to overtake them, and the nature of the ground was such as to give the least possible fatigue to their horses, which being thorough-bred, gave no evidence of being at all distressed at the pace or distance they had come.

There was very little conversation ensued as they crossed the moor, and they had reached some distance over it, ere the baffled thieves made their appearance at the outskirts of the wood; they saw them still follow on their track, but the speed they went at defied all pursuit on foot, and they were lost in the distance, to be seen no more.

In two more hours they had passed the moor, stopped at a little out-of-the-way hut, and partook of the scanty refreshment the place afforded, and were again on their way, now through narrow lanes, lined with tall bushes, young oaks, ash and willow, then they had another wide heath to cross, covered with broom, all in yellow and purple bloom, from which the linnet, wheatear, and other small birds of the

season sprung up and wheeled about in airy flight as they were disturbed by the party in their progress. Night drew on, and just as the sun was sinking below the horizon, they stopped at a small hut, all fatigued to the utmost with their long and wearying journey; and there receiving every attention from the owners of the miserable hostel, who seemed wretchedly poor, but honest people, they passed the night in safety and sound repose.

The morning broke beautifully, the sun rose cloudlessly, and shone with a brightness that almost made the eyes ache to gaze on the things glittering in its brilliant rays; a cool wind, sweetly refreshing tempered the heat it was pouring down, and gave a freshness to the morning most delicious. The humble repast spread before them was partaken of, the horses, carefully dressed and attended to by Gualtier, were brought forth, and they mounted upon their backs to resume their journey; they rode on mile after mile without any incident occurring worthy of relation, save that every now and then Flora kept wondering why they did not come in sight of London, or at least something which would have shewn them they were in its neighbourhood; but so far from such a desirous event taking place the country grew wilder and wilder as they advanced, and instead of any appearance of "the great city" presenting itself, there appeared no indication even of a village.

Gualtier, with consummate skill and address, had managed during the whole of his progress to avoid them or any other place where it was likely any explanation which would shew the maidens or Leon the true state of the affair: he had the greatest difficulty to accomplish it, but he succeeded: his vigilance was compelled to be exerted to the greatest stretch, for he had not only to prevent Violet and Leon from coming to any understanding, but Martin from taking any advantage of Flora's comparatively unprotected situation.

In the latter he had not much difficulty; for Martin, entirely engrossed by a passion for Violet, and the success of schemes which he was incessantly planning and rejecting for others more feasible or better suited to his purpose, found little inclination to think of or talk to Flora, and as she had an instinctive abhorrence for him, their conversation or acquaintance was below freezing point.

Leon paid Violet attentions which did credit to his high sense of honour; he never alluded, save the single time mentioned, to her supposed consent to accompany him to Exmoor. And although his language was high-flown and affected, he never uttered a sentence or a word calculated to raise a blush on her cheek, or a frown upon her brow. He was not garrulous nor was he taciturn, but endeavoured by every little delicate act to make her forget the unpleasant situation in which his rashness had placed her. She could not but estimate his conduct as it deserved, and felt grateful so far; if it was only for the studious manner in which he prevented Martin du Bois from speaking or holding any communication with her, as he could, with ease, perceive she shuddered to be even near him.

Thus continued they for five long days; no incident save their pursuit through the wood occurring; stopping at nights at very retired huts, and in the morning pursuing their way until night drew on, and found them jaded and weary from their day's exertions. On the afternoon of the sixth day they entered the borders of a forest, desolate, black, and drear-looking. Stunted trees almost leafless, dark pines and firs, grew among beech and oaks and elms in such quantities as to give an unnaturally sombre aspect to the forest. They pursued a winding path, which overhanging trees made gloomy and drear, and communicated somewhat of its dismal tone to the whole of the party. Both Violet and Flora came to the conclusion that they had been deceived, and were journeying from London instead of towards it. Indeed, Flora had twice or thrice challenged Gualtier with it, but he had quieted her by working on her fears, telling her he was compelled to pursue this roundabout way to avoid marauders and cut-throats with which the country abounded. In that he spoke truth, for those who are acquainted with the history of the times know that every part of the country was grievously infested with thieves and marauders of all descriptions, and she, who had seen a little of them, had learned quite sufficient to make her ready to sacrifice a considerable amount of time rather than once more be subjected either to attack or pursuit by them; she, therefore, submitted with a better grace than she would have done to her long journey; and, through the hints and persuasions of Gualtier, succeeded in preventing Violet from once more appealing to Leon to restore them, as he had promised, to her foster-father.

Their progress through the forest was slow and difficult. There was an oppressive silence reigning around, and a sense of dreary solitariness hanging about the scene which gave a mournful heaviness to their feelings. The conversation, which had been but feebly supported during the day, now entirely ceased, and they rode on mutely, and with as sad an aspect as though they were following some beloved one to an early grave.

The afternoon was completely engrossed in their tedious traverse of the wood, and the day was fast declining, without their perceiving the smallest resemblance of any place which would afford them shelter for the night. The twilight was anticipated by the natural gloom of the place, and by the time that twilight had really arrived it was nearly night in the forest.

While indulging in thoughts which, if they could have been all laid bare for inspection, would have shown that there were none which were not enveloped in some gloomy foreboding or dark remembrance, there suddenly arose from the earth with a shrill scream, a large hawk; in darting out of Gualtier's way it got entangled with Violet's horse. Flora, horridly startled by its sudden appearance, shrieked loudly, and the horse alarmed by both, took fright, started off at a tremendous pace, and notwithstanding all Violet's efforts, tore along with frightful rapidity.

In an instant, with a loud cry to those behind to follow, which was as may be imagined unnecessary, Gualtier dashed after her, followed by Flora and the remainder of the party at the top of their speed. Flora's steed, however, distanced them, and notwithstanding the furious rate at which Violet's flew, he was not long in gaining rapidly upon him. On Flora's nearing Violet, she screamed her name almost frantically, as though it would have the effect of checking her, while her steed having his head given to him, being of high blood, entered into the chase with all the emulation to overtake and pass the beast he was in pursuit of, as if he had been endowed with reason. It was terrible to see how they dashed through places which, unaffected by the present exciting cause, they would most carefully have picked their way. Shrubs and bushes were leaped through, boughs torn aside, narrow alleys flown along, and seemingly under the protection of an especial Providence, without any of them suffering one of the natural consequences to have been expected from such a terrific progress through so wild and dangerous a place.

For some distance the chace continued, and Flora,

to her own terror as well as to the agony she suffered on Violet's part, suddenly found herself borne past her beloved friend, and instead of following the rescue, leading the way. She screamed loudly, tugged at the rein, but her steed's blood was up, and it would have taken the strong arm of a powerful man to have checked him in his wild career, so long as he had the sound of the footsteps of Violet's horse in his ears.

Tearing along at a desperate rate, unconscious where she was being borne, expecting each instant to be hurled from her seat by the low straggling branch of some tree, Flora grew as much alarmed for herself as she had previously been for Violet. It was in vain she found to pull with all her strength at the bridle—the beast paid no more attention to it than if she had suffered him to hold his way unchecked, until, unexpectedly, in the midst of her shrieking and pulling, she found him drop his speed, and to her surprise, and no less to her pleasure, stop short, and remain perfectly quiet, saving the sound his panting breath created. She had kept her seat wonderfully, but not her self-possession, and it took her a moment or so to recover it. When, however, she turned round, and saw both Violet and her horse lay stretched upon the ground: it was but the act of a second to spring from her horse and fly to her assistance; and she had scarcely raised her, when Gualtier arrived, followed closely by Leon, Martin, and the retainers. The five instantly alighted; Leon was the first to dart to Flora's side, take Violet from her arms, and seek to render her whatever assistance she might need.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently, "she breathes! she has not fainted—she is not dead. One of you seek instantly for some water; you will find some in some hollow place near."

"The river Ex is close at hand," cried Gualtier, directing one of the men. "Quick—away with you, and bring some as fast as you can."

"You saw her fall," said Martin to Flora, anxiously. "Did she strike against any tree, or was she thrown with great violence?"

"I do not know," she replied; "my horse passed her; he stopped suddenly, and on turning round I found both her and the horse lying upon the ground."

"The horse is dead," replied Gualtier. "That pace, after such a journey, was too much for him; he dropped dead, I'll warrant, and, if so, her fall would, on this soft grass, only shake her a little, without hurting her. She has fainted from fright, that's all!"

"I pray to heaven it may be so," ejaculated Flora.

"How far have we now to go, Gualtier?" inquired Leon, impatiently.

"Scarce two hundred yards," he replied; "this chase has shortened our journey at least an hour."

"Lead the way at once," cried Leon, "we shall afford her better assistance there than here. She is as cold as death! quick, quick! stand not gazing, but away!"

Gualtier obeyed him and led the way on foot; Leon carried Violet in his arms, and Flora walked by his side; Martin brought up the rear; and the retainers remained to bring the steeds after them. In a few minutes they arrived at a building which looked black and gloomy in the twilight, appeared of tolerable size, but as if it contained not a human being. Gualtier, unaffected by its appearance, commenced knocking energetically at a stout oaken door with the butt-end of his riding-whip, and in a loud voice summoned the woodman who had possession of it. At the end of a few minutes, during which his knocking and calls for admittance had been incessant, a voice rose above his din, and demanded in round deep tones,—

"Who knocks?"

"This is I, Gualtier, and thine and my master, the Chevalier Leon de la Agnelet, accompanied by friends. Open quickly, for there is one here that needs the assistance of thy good wife. Quick man, quick!"

"Gualtier, Chevalier de la Agnelet!" echoed the man, in evident surprise, and at the same time letting fall bars, which from the sound they gave, were evidently very ponderous.

When the last had been removed, the door opened, and a young sturdy fellow, bearing a torch, appeared; behind him, looking anxiously over his shoulder, was his wife—young, pretty, and interesting in her appearance; the woodman immediately made a bow more rude than courteous, although he intended it for the latter, and said,—

"Welcome to Exmoor."

"Exmoor!" repeated Flora, with astonishment.

"Hush!" cried Gualtier, raising his finger to his lips, and then whispered, "I will explain all satisfactorily to you presently," and honoured her at the same moment with a gaze which he intended to be very affectionate, but which in the surprise and alarm at the discovery she had made, was quite lost upon her.

"My good dame," exclaimed Leon, hurriedly, to the woodman's wife, preventing any reply from Flora, "this maiden hath fainted; she has been thrown from her steed, which took fright with her. Take her in thy charge, and with the aid of this maiden, her friend, render her every assistance her situation demands, and let me know as speedily as possible whether she hath sustained any injury beyond that which fright hath done her."

The young woman obeyed him, removing Violet from his arms, and as she had recovered from her swoon without being restored to consciousness, she led her unresistingly, but gently, from the room, accompanied by Flora, who assisted in supporting Violet to an upper apartment. The accommodations were very limited, owing to the people who had charge of this lonely mansion not having the slightest expectation of their arrival; and the woodman's wife, in apologising to Flora as she took them into a small room scantily furnished, told her that by the next morning she trusted to get some of the unused apartments in such sufficient order as to remove the inconvenience to which she and Violet must be unavoidably subject for the present.

Flora, struck by the mildness of her voice, and upon looking on her face, by its expression of kindness, at once made a confidant of her, related artlessly how they had been torn from their friends; how they had been deceived into the belief that they were being restored; and concluded by an energetic, and as it proved an affecting appeal—for the young woman's eyes were filled with tears—to befriend them, to save them from insult, and to assist them, if in her power, to escape.

The woodman's wife, whose name was Nanette, seemed moved by the appeal in no ordinary degree; she wrung Flora's hand warmly, expressed a keen sense of their perilous situation, and told her that as far as she could aid them she would do her utmost, but bade her not hope too much, for the mansion, or rather turret, for it was scarcely more, was so far removed from any other situation, surrounded by such intricacies and dangers, that it would be impossible to get away safely from it, unless under the guidance of one well experienced and practised in its approaches and its egressive paths. The only person who could do that was her husband, whom she thought she could enlist in their favour: he was a good and compassionate man, she said, and she had every hope that he would not suffer them to be the victims of the villany

intended them, without making some exertion in their behalf.

She cautioned her, however, to be secret, and not breathe a hint even that any conversation but that which related to their entertainment and comforts had transpired between them. Flora promised her, for her own sake, to exercise the greatest discretion and caution, and thanked her with considerable earnestness for the sympathy she had displayed in their cause. Nanette, however, checked her, saying she would endeavour to deserve them; and then turning her attention to Violet, she, with Flora's help, succeeded in restoring her to consciousness; although she remained in a state of weakness from the fright she had endured, and from the effects of her fall; fortunately, she had not received any injury beyond the severe shake which her violent concussion with the earth gave her, and herself said, in reply to the tender and anxious inquiries of Flora, that a night's repose would restore her to convalescence. Nanette then quitted them, and returned with materials for a slight repast, which they had little disposition to partake of, and requested to be shown to their sleeping-room.

Here a fresh difficulty arose, for the only places that she had been able thus hastily to prepare for them were two small chambers, each too small for two, but just a comfortable size for one; both Flora and Violet objected to being parted; but on discussing the point it was found to be impracticable to do otherwise, and with a very bad grace they consented that it should be so. It was a small consolation, a very small one, that their chambers adjoined, and it, in a little degree, reconciled them to the separation. Flora had at first resolved, against all opposition, to sit by the side of Violet, and watch her as she slept; but our heroine, who knew that the affectionate girl was as much in need of repose as herself, would not permit it, and made her promise that she would retire to her couch and court repose as earnestly as though she were at her own dear little home in Brenchley; they then embraced, and kissing each other tenderly, wept at their forlorn situation, though each kindly strove to console the other: then they separated, and Flora, sobbing violently, was led by Nanette into the adjoining room.

Violet did not retire immediately to her couch, but drawing back a large curtain which shrouded the window, gazed out in the broad moonlight. Nothing met her sight but the clear sky and the tops of trees, of all species, growing in entangled profusion, waving mournfully in the night-wind: the scene was desolate and lonely to a degree, and was uncalculated to remove from her mind the oppressive sense of her solitariness.

For a long time she stood there gazing; thoughts, sad and dreary, thronged through her brain. The events of the last few weeks, so crowded with incidents, involving such excitement, passed rapidly before her, bringing sorrowful recollections, and inducing a lowness of spirits almost insupportable: she felt as though her heart would break; the very doubts respecting her birth had subjected her to much unhappy speculation; the incertitude of her escape from her present situation filled her mind with fearful forebodings, with apprehension, and with despair.

She looked around her; all was silent, solitary, and still. Let what might befall her, it seemed as though there was none near to help her—no hand to save—no arm to stretch forth in her behalf—no tongue to utter a word in her defence—and he to whom, in the direst strait, she would once have looked to for aid, and would have felt assured too of its efficacy, was far away—having no idea of her desperate condition; perhaps turning his eyes to the same moon, and making himself happy in the belief that she was safely removed from all evil or unhappiness by the vigilance and protecting presence of her foster-father and his brother Ethelbert. And then again she thought 'twas better as 'twas, and she felt glad that he nothing knew, for then he would not fret and grieve for what he had not the power to help or remove.

An hour passed away and she had not gone: there stood she, with her clasped hands before her, her face turned upwards, and her eyes dimmed with thronging tears, and her spirits almost laid prostrate by the deep melancholy which her lorn position produced: at length nature prevailed over the perturbed state of her mind, aided by the chilliness which her immoveableness in the night air had occasioned, and the fatigue of her day's journey combined, and she retired from the window to seek her couch. Her first act was to draw a small cross—the gift of Wat—from her bosom, and elevating it in her hands, kneel down by a chair beside her, and pray for assistance and protection from the Holy Virgin.

While in the midst of a fervent prayer, she suddenly heard a crumbling and rustling of leaves outside the window, as though some one was stealthily clambering up to it; at first she regarded it not, but as it became too loud not to hear it, and, under the circumstances, too alarming not to notice, she turned her head, and to her horror beheld the head and shoulders of a man above the coping of the window; he had opened the lattice, and was raising himself up to enter, when her eyes encountered him. Overcome by fright, she uttered a piercing shriek, and fainted.

CHAPTER V.

"The challenger and challenged face to face
Approach
* * * * *
Their eyes with fury burn:
None greets; for none the greeting will return.
* * * * *
Then both, no moment lost, at once advance
Against each other, arm'd. * *
They lash, they foin, they pass, they strive to bore
Their corslets, and the thinnest parts explore."

DRYDEN.

"Each ravisher prepares to seize his own;
The brides, invaded with a rude embrace,
Shriek out for aid! coufusion fills the place.
Quick to redeem the prey, their plighted lords
Advance; the palace gleams with shining swords."

CYMON AND IPHIGENIA.

THE spot chosen for the settlement of the matter at issue between Michael Rycheart and Rupert, son to the Earl of Tonbridge, was, as stated, but a short distance from where the rupture took place; and as a large number of knights and squires happened to be on the spot at the time, their blood scarce yet cooled down from the sanguinary conflict they had been so recently engaged in, they flocked round the combatants with eager eyes to see the issue of a duel, the cause for which the greater portion were unacquainted with. The presence of the Lord Lewis Beauchamp, Lord William Beauclerk, and others of good birth and of command in the army, restrained the boisterous ebullitions of feeling they would otherwise have indulged in, and induced them in keeping a large ring round the duellists, to preserve a degree of order which, in all probability, they would not otherwise have shown.

As soon as Michael and Rupert crossed their

weapons, every eye was fixed upon them, and the hubbub around ceased; all were waiting anxiously the issue of the first successful passado; various speculations were made upon which of the two would give it. They each confronted the other with courage and an appearance of coolness, which on the part of Michael, at least, was real, but which was in a great measure forced by Rupert, who fumed with extreme rage at the success of Michael's appeal, at the bitter reproof he had received, as well as at what he deemed the unpardonable affront of being called a liar and a coward—he, an earl's son! by a peasant! It may not be said that he was naturally vindictive, but in the present instance no miser ever thirsted for gold as he for Michael's heart's blood. He inwardly resolved that if it was in his power to shed it, no consideration should withhold him making it pour forth like water. Michael, on the contrary, "had no such stuff in his thoughts." He had already carried his point, that of invalidating Rupert's unmanly assertion, of humbling him before so many of his own station, which revenged the anguish his conduct at Brenchley had caused, and clearing Flora's name from the foul name he would have been guiltily, foolish enough, to have fixed upon it. These being the only points on which he had quarrelled, and being repaid by Rupert's humiliating retractation, he cared not to proceed farther in the duel then defending himself, and, if possible, disarming his opponent. With these feelings they commenced the conflict; and although Rupert had been well taught, and by a practiced hand, he found that though he was an earl's son opposed to a peasant, he would have all his best abilities called forth to make him the victor. They both fought with coolness and steadiness: Michael doing nothing but parrying Rupert's blows, which, when delivered, were done so fiercely, but without bringing him any advantage; there was not a feint or device in cut and thrust he did not essay, but failed in gaining the success he so earnestly aimed at. Foiled in all his choice manœuvres, parried in every thrust made with the best prospects of success, and under what appeared occasionally great advantages, he began to lose his temper, not only at his want of success, but at the evident manner in which Michael received his attack without returning it; he felt quickly and strongly that it made him stand alone as the revengeful and vindictive antagonist, while the other appeared merely to wield his sword for the sake of preserving his honour from any imputation, or to hold his antagonist's abilities as a swordsman in the most supreme contempt. Indeed, the remarks made on all sides tended considerably in bringing him to this conclusion, and in adding to the rage which already possessed him, a feeling which he had striven so hard to keep out of sight, but which had gnawed his vitals until he could no longer endure it; and then he began to hit wildly, to thrust fiercely and rapidly, laying himself open to his opponent in a manner which, had Michael chosen to have availed himself of, would have proved fatal to him. Once or twice Ulfred made a hasty exclamation of warning to him, for which he was reproved by Lord Lewis Beauchamp; and although he was eaten up with anxiety and alarm for Rupert's safety, he did not again infringe upon what was considered a necessary rule, which said no advice should be given to a combatant by a bystander, and one strictly observed in all duels. The swiftness with which Rupert delivered his blows, and the dexterity with which Michael received and parried them, made the fight appear desperate, and consequently grow more interesting, until at length Rupert, out of breath, paused for an instant, and Michael said with a smile—

"Are you satisfied? if so, let the combat cease. You have supported your character for courage well. I have done my duty, I know; therefore, if you choose to retire, our contest may cease without dishonour to either."

"If you grow frightened, leave the field to me, and cry craven," returned Rupert, contemptuously; "for my part, I'll wash out the stain thou hast fixed on me with thy best blood ere I cease the combat, or perish in the attempt."

"I would have spared thee the shame of an ignoble defeat," retorted Michael, the blood mounting hotly to his brow at Rupert's words; "but since my good intention meets with such a scornful reception, why thou shalt e'en take the consequences. Nor shall what I deemed the rashness of young blood meet with the consideration I have hitherto shown thee."

"Thou!—consideration!" echoed Rupert, chafing with rage; "talk with thy sword; mine ears shall no longer be offended with thy insults—come on!"

Again their swords clashed fiercely, and this time Michael did not act entirely on the defensive, but returned many of the hard blows with interest which Rupert dealt him. He inflicted two severe wounds upon him, and then, with considerable address, and seemingly with the greatest ease, disarmed him. Maddened with pain and rage, Rupert, despite all hazard, rushed upon him, and tried desperately to wrest his sword from him, but in vain; and Michael, disengaging his hand from his grasp, threw his own sword away, seized his antagonist by the waist, and proved himself as expert a wrestler as he had a swordsman, by lifting him from the ground, and flinging him a fair back-fall. Lord Lewis Beauchamp and Ulfred now stepped in to interfere, and the nobleman drew Michael away; while Ulfred lifted Rupert from the ground, and found that with the loss of blood, and the effects of the fall united, he had fainted.

At this juncture Sir Walter Manny, accompanied by Wat Tyler, appeared, making his way toward the scene of the recent contest. He looked upon the assembled multitude with marks of surprise, mingled with displeasure, and on reaching the spot, and perceiving Sir Lewis standing by the side of Michael, who bore little or no mark of having been the actor in the late duel, he inquired of him an explanation of what had just taken place, part of which he had witnessed, but had arrived too late to prevent. In a few brief words Lord Lewis explained, and when he had finished, Sir Walter said, hastily,—

"It was ill-advised, my Lord, to have promoted or have even suffered an affair of this nature to have taken place."

"I believe, Sir Walter Manny," returned Lord Lewis haughtily, "I have not to learn how to advise what is due to honour."

"No, my Lord," replied Sir Walter, "nor how to support it when in danger; but you should know that this is not a time for brawls. To use the mildest term, it was impolitic, having just conquered the town, to appear fighting among ourselves; whatever the difference, there was plenty of time for it to have been adjusted without choosing a time when the blood of the inhabitants of a town you have overcome is yet wet upon your habiliments: the conflict I perceive, is decided, I will therefore say nothing further respecting it; but I trust to you not again, under such circumstances, beneath your notice, to permit an affair of this nature to take place."

"Your rebuke is just," replied Lord Lewis frankly, "I was wrong, but my excuse lies in the interest I felt for this young man, who knew what was due to his good name, to that of a maiden he loved, and to the

nobility of human nature; and had the courage, in defiance of obstacles that might have held back many —I will not say a braver or better man—but many whose stations are much higher than his own. However, trust me, Sir Walter, that while I serve under you, you shall not again have to reprove my oversight."

"I honour your motive," replied Sir Walter, with a pleasant smile, "although I quarrel with the policy of the act: however, let the subject drop. The Earl of Derby, in conjunction with myself, has commanded the removal of the dead and wounded from the streets and haven, and every vestige of the conflict. You will, therefore, my Lord, at once summon those of your troop who have escaped wounds or death, and command them to assist the rest of the troops in putting this order in force."

"I hasten to obey your orders, Sir Walter," replied Lord Lewis, saluting him and instantly quitting the spot."

"My Lord William Beauclerk," exclaimed Sir Walter to him directly Lord Lewis had departed, "you will perform the same service as Lord Lewis Beauchamp, and will favour me by issuing the same orders to the Earl of Suffolk, Lord Reginald Cobham, and Lord William Warwick."

Lord Beauclerk bowed his head, and quitted the spot in the same direction Lord Lewis had taken, and Sir Walter then addressed Ulfred, saying,—

"Meet me within an hour at my quarters; I wish you to bear my despatches to England immediately. Remove your cousin from this spot without delay. I would not answer for the result, should the Earl of Derby see him in this state, and learn the cause. I hope he is not mortally hurt?"

"No," replied Ulfred; "he has two deep flesh wounds, but not dangerous; the violence with which he was thrown has shaken him, but I doubt not with a little attention he will recover. He was very headstrong, passionate, and unwise: he has brought it all upon himself; and my sense of justice compels me to say that his antagonist, Michael, bore himself temperately, and with forbearance, or his swoon might have been one of death instead of a mere faint. I trust it will be a lesson to him, one which he will properly appreciate, and by it regulate his future actions."

"I hope it will turn out as you wish," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny; "he is a fine young man, and it will be a pity that impetuosity or rashness should destroy the glorious prospects which are before him. He appears to pay you much deference, Ulfred; do you apply this lesson in any way you think best to him, and, my life on't, a little reasoning will make him see his error, and feel glad that he has been taught in time, before he got too old, to profit by what he might be taught. Away! here comes the Earl. Quick, or you will be seen. Loiterers, to your quarters; the order has been given that each man repair to them. Away! rest and repose yourselves while ye can; ye know not how soon Edward's service may require your prowess."

The soldiery, who had with eager eyes been gazing on the fray, and listened attentively to all that had fallen from Sir Walter's lips since his arrival, obeyed his command, and in the space of a minute, as if by magic, the spot was cleared of all but Sir Walter, Wat Tyler, and Michael. Trumpets now began to sound from various parts, summoning the straggling soldiers to their respective banners, and as the knight, our hero, and Michael took their way into the principal street, they beheld the soldiers passing to and fro, bearing the dead to a large grave dug hastily for that purpose, and the wounded to a temporary hospital, where their hurts could be seen and attended to. Besides the men occupied with their ghastly burdens, others were engaged in gathering together the weapons which lay about the streets in profusion, preserving those which were uninjured, and throwing those which were broken into one huge heap. The scene of the wounded, the dying, and the dead, was a sickly sight enough, but the numbers which were continually being passed or borne by them, removed, in a great measure, the horrifying disgust which the sight at first created; and, ultimately, they pursued their way, scarcely noticing that which had previously given them such disagreeable and painful sensations. They were wending their way to the dwelling of Grubhen L'Eschelle. Wat, on hearing from Sir Walter Manny, at his quarters, what was to ensue after the victory of Cadsant, had related the incident which had taken place at the miser's, and had to such a degree interested him, that he resolved to visit it; and, as it was the strict order of Edward that they should, in the event of capturing the city, burn it to the ground, to inform the miser in person of the order, induce him to remove his wealth, and see that it was not taken from him by any of the soldiery during its removal. In their way thither Wat related the story which Bullfric had told him respecting himself and Katrine, to which Sir Walter listened with considerable attention, and when Wat concluded, observed somewhat thoughtfully,—

"I would have no trust in the knave. I know him to be a bold and fearless man, and as such raised him to a certain position in my troop, but permitted him to engage in nothing where he was not immediately beneath my eye. The story of his treatment of his wife is doubtless true, but I have not much faith in his contrition, and I strongly suspect he would not hesitate, notwithstanding his professions, to fulfil his original intention of securing as much booty as possible, and of abusing the maiden. We shall, however, see whether he has kept his faith or no; if he has kept it so much the better—I will put it out of his power to break it in future."

"There is no fear that he has broken it yet," returned Wat, "for it is out of his power at present, whatever his inclinations. He must be honourable by compulsion; for independent of John Chandos, there is Mark Grayling and Leowulf to keep him in check, should he show any indication of forfeiting his solemn promise."

"Aye, but Bullfric has not to learn that stratagem is better than force," said Sir Walter. "He is a cunning knave; while the three he has to outwit are open, honest, and, judging others by themselves, will be easy victims to the guile of one so artful as he; but whatever his intentions, he will not have much time to carry them into effect; and I will, as I have said, take care for the future he has not the opportunity. The dwelling is not far from hence, I hope?"

"We are at it," replied Wat, stopping at the door by which he and Michael had entered with Bullfric and his comrades. There was no occasion for the spring to be pressed by him, for the door was open. As it was the dusk of evening, this excited some surprise, which was increased by their hearing the sound of loud voices, apparently shouting for help, accompanied by a loud knocking, as though the vociferators were beating violently against a fastened door which confined them in, or kept them out of some room.

"There is some treachery going on," cried Wat, instantly.

"Aye," replied Sir Walter, "it sounds like it. My knighthood to a mail glove! but Bullfric has been at his tricks."

"If he has played me false," cried Wat, excitedly,

"the Lord lend him grace and help, for he will have need of both an' he gets in my clutches. I would as soon spare a tiger that had robbed me of the dearest friend I had on earth, as show him favour or mercy. Follow me, a few minutes will settle the questions. Look to your weapons; there may be more than we look for to encounter in this matter."

"After the work of this morning, it must be a matter very formidable to turn us back," said Sir Walter, laughingly; "besides I don't feel inclined to go back, and when that is the case, the persuasion must be well backed that makes me. Lead on, and unravel the mystery. By the mass! but the shouters have good lungs, and if I mistake not, the preux Squire, John Chandos, is among them; I think I can distinguish the tone I have heard his throat so often give forth."

"Whoever it be, Wat," observed Michael, drawing his sword, "I am at your bidding to the death."

"Come on," cried Wat, suddenly dashing down the passage leading to the upper apartments, on hearing a shriek, which was almost drowned in the shouts and clamour of the blows upon the door, evidently given with redoubled vigour. He was closely followed by Sir Walter Manny and Michael; the creaking stairs were easily surmounted, they found the door at the top open, and they ran down the corridor into the ante-chamber, where they had first beheld the old porter, and as they entered they were almost horrified on beholding, by the last rays of the setting sun, which were admitted by a loophole of tolerable sized dimensions, the old porter, in his high-backed chair, writhing in the agonies of death; he was bleeding from a wound in his side, and as the rays of sunlight fell upon his face, it looked hideously ghastly, from the agony it exhibited, distorting the wrinkled features which great age had bronzed, but which the coming death had changed to a livid hue; his eyes were rolling fearfully, and his whole frame seemed convulsed with intense torture, although more of the mind than the body; for the instant his eyes lighted on Wat and Michael, who had hastily approached him, with fearful forebodings; the moment they had perceived his state, he sprang to his feet, waved his hand frantically, pointed upwards, touched his right hand, struggled frightfully to utter something, but was unable to exceed a short hysteric laugh, which was checked by a dreadful effusion of blood from his mouth and nose; he tossed his hands wildly to and fro, turned round twice, and fell dead upon the ground. They all shuddered at his fall, and for a moment were paralysed. Sir Walter was the first to speak—

"There is indeed treachery here," he cried; "let us search the house at once, it is useless to remain here; the old man is dead—no assistance of ours will avail—Hark! that was a woman's shriek!" he suddenly shouted, as a violent scream burst on their ears.

"This way, this way!" exxclaimed Wat, darting out of the ante-room, and leading the way to the chambers above, with Sir Walton and Michael almost treading upon his heels; the screams were redoubled, and so were the blows upon the door—it must have been a strong one to have withstood them; shriek followed shriek in rapid succession. Wat tore along, his heart throbbing tremendously with excitement, his teeth clenched, and his hands grasping the hilt of his sword as if it would crush it to powder.

"Michael!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "make for the door which confines our friends in some room—I can now distinguish Leowulf's voice."

"And I," replied Michael; "but I'll soon set them free, and be on your track. God speed you!" Waving his hand, he ran down a passage that branched off to the point where the battering of the door was going on, while Wat, with Sir Walter, kept on in the direction of the screams, which grew louder and more agonizing as they approached them, and another minute did not elapse ere they tore down a corridor, reached a room, the door of which was ajar, dashed it open and sprung into the midst of it, finding it half filled with armed men; both Rubacelle and Katrine struggling in the arms of two ruffians; Grubben l'Echelle dead upon the floor, and the soldiers coolly standing gazing on the proceedings of their villanous comrades, paying not the slightest attention to the heartrending shrieks of the wretched females; but on the contrary, bandying rude and coarse jests upon the strength with which a frenzy little short of madness had endowed Katrine and Rubacelle.

Hurling the bystanders on each side with such force they were almost thrown to the ground, Wat and Sir Walter gained the fellows who had possession of the females. Wat dashed his fist with such tremendous force in the face of him who held Rubacelle, that the blood gushed out in torrents, he staggered back under its effects, at the same instant he was hurled to the floor, and the maiden was rescued from his grasp. The poor girl, blinded with horror and fright, yet recognised a deliverer in Wat, and clung to him with a tenacity it seemed that nothing but death could shake off, and he put his arm protectingly round her waist, while, with his right hand, he waved a stout falchion, prepared to save her or be cut to pieces. In the meanwhile, Sir Walter's first grasp of the fellow having Katrine in his power was by the throat, and the grip was fatal. Sir Walter, independent of his disgust and indignation at this monstrous treatment of a defenceless woman, was enraged at the utter disregard to the orders he had issued for every soldier to return to his quarters hours since—he burned with ungovernable fury: the villany of the whole affair was so great he was completely convulsed with passion, and his seizure of the man's throat was so terrific that the windpipe was instantaneously compressed, and strangulation at once ensued; it was the work only of a minute, for he dislocated his neck, by a sudden jerk, and flung him from him a dead man. As Rubacelle had to Wat, Katrine clung to him for protection; the weak instantly, in danger, comprehend who are their friends, and the two females intuitively hung on the new comers for safety, even as though they had known them for years, and knew that in so fearful an hour as the present they could rely upon them for succour and preservation; they could not have placed themselves in better hands, at least so far as the strength of single arms, and the courage of the bravest hearts went; it is true that it was in one sense but a repetition of what had been before enacted that day under the same roof, and Wat, added to his efforts in the attack of the town, was therefore schooled in some degree for the part he had undertaken. He looked with steadiness and coolness around at the assembled men-at-arms advancing almost pell-mell to attack him and Sir Walter, which the circumstances, however requisite it might have been for preserving their lives to have possessed, would have justified him in not being so fortunate as to be able to command.

Sir Walter, although from what has been stated, not so cool as Wat, was quite indifferent as to the number about to assault them, and worked up by their flagrant disobedience of orders, as well as their cowardly outrage, would have stood his ground against them if they had been five hundred instead of about twenty; in the gloomy light he was not recognised by

any, although Wat was, it appeared, by a trooper calling out at the top of his voice, as if he had made a joyful discovery, not more important than desirable—

him limb from limb; he's a self-made dainty squire, and has an old spade upon a field of mould for a 'scutcheon. He has spilt the blood of our best com-

"That is the young hound that spoiled our sport this morning, who cut down Hardgrasp as if he had been a rotten banner-staff—show him no quarter, hack

rades like water, so spare him not, but take care of the maiden; mind you don't let a hasty blow destroy the young plant before we have plucked the blossom."

"You are too witty to live, knave," cried Wat bitterly; "an' thou wilt come within the reach of my falchion, I will prove my words."

"Here I am," cried the fellow with a taunting laugh, "prove your words," and he commenced attacking him warmly. Wat, however, was at no loss to defend himself, although he was crowded for room, but Sir Walter and he stood back to back and expecting speedy assistance from Michael and their friends, had no fear but they could with ease keep the rascals at bay until they arrived.

"Prove your words," shouted the trooper, delivering his blows rapidly, and with all his strength at Wat; "remember I am neither Hardgrasp nor a rotten banner-staff"

"No," returned Wat, "thou'rt a reed compared to either." As the trooper made a swashing blow, he, by a masterly foil, and being as well possessed of immense strength of wrist, jerked his sword out of his hand, and like lightning he uplifted his falchion, and made it descend with tremendous force upon the boasting soldier, who as instantly fell to the floor covered with blood. The groan, or rather shriek, of the man as he was cut down was heard by Sir Walter, as well as the heavy fall of the body, and he cried instantly, although opposed to a desperate ruffian—

"Bravely done, Wat! punish the next rascal in the same way."

Wat did not need such counsel; he was too well acquainted with the hazard of his position in being opposed to a number of men accustomed to scenes of blood and rapine, and callous of everything connected with it, to give away a chance of thinning their number, by being tenacious of slaying any one of them who would esteem it a merit to cut him down. The soldiers, on seeing their comrade fall, uttered a fierce shout, and attacked him by half a dozen at a time, seemingly quite regardless of the advice which the dying trooper had given them. Again had Wat devoutly to thank the truth and strength of Leowulf's mail for preserving him from many cuts, which, but for its staunch resistance, must have wounded him severely. Swords flashed round him and Sir Walter fearfully, but without intimidating them, or inducing them to resign the females, or even to appeal to their justice by requesting them to attack them singly, a point which in this era of bloodshed and battle was frequently conceded, until the one foe or the many were slain. Their situation was perilous in the extreme; they both disdained to call a parley, and fought with such desperate ardour that they perceived not both their charges had fainted. Perfect masters of fence, they were enabled to ward and parry the showers of blows which rained upon them from all parties; not only to guard their own persons, but by dexterous management to shield their fair and helpless burdens from harm. They had not long to remain, however, in this perilous situation, for almost immediately after the trooper already spoken of had bitten the dust, the door which in the struggle had been flung to, was burst open, and a voice (Michael's) roared out—"A Manny! a Manny! to the rescue."

The assaulting party now in their turn found themselves fiercely assailed by Michael, John Chandos, Bullfric, Leowulf, and Mark Grayling. The voice of Bullfric quivering with passion, was raised above all the din which the addition of the new comers made.

"Cut them to shreds, the hell-kites!" he roared; "hew them to strips! no quarter! no quarter for the damned hounds! cut them down! cut them down!"

He slashed and cut, as he uttered his words, with the fury and mercilessness of a frenzy wrought to madness. He was ably seconded by his companions, and the room became speedily one scene of slaughter. John Chandos, an enthusiast, consequently hasty and impatient, had been worked into a tremendous rage by being locked in a room with the others—hearing the screams of females he was thus debarred from succouring, and when released by Michael was almost—like Bullfric—blind with fury. A glance, as he entered the room, showed him which were the foes, and they must have been stout men indeed who could singly have withstood the impetuosity of his first attack. The smith, Mark Grayling, and Michael, though, perhaps not so extremely excited by the ungovernable passion that possessed their two companions, did their work as surely and as unflinchingly. The contest was, however, put an end to in a manner as unlooked for as it was sudden—the magic of a name decided what swords might have failed to accomplish, the repetition of Michael's cry of—"A Manny! to the rescue!" echoed by John Chandos, and in the heat of the moment by Sir Walter himself, had the effect of suspending at once hostilities. The well-known voice of Sir Walter, heard so often amid the shouts and turmoil of war, always leading the way to victory, was instantly recognised by the soldiers; and such was the consequence of discipline, that they threw down their arms immediately it reached their ears, and roared for mercy. Bullfric was, however, for not showing it, and the fellow who was his opponent having thrown down his sword, would have been slain by him but for the intervention of Leowulf, who received the blow upon his sword, and pushed him back.

"Hold," he cried, "the man sues for quarter: you would not kill him in cold blood, would you?"

"Yes!" roared Bullfric, "any way: he would not have cared a stiver for my life if I'd been in his power—why should I consider him? Besides it's no thanks to him that my wife has not suffered worse than death. Am I to have no revenge? Stand out of the way, man! he had no mercy on those who could not help themselves—I'll have none on him!"

"Keep back! cried the smith, coolly; "you touch him not now: he will have his reward, fear not; he has broken all orders, he will not go scot free: Sir Walter will give him his due!"

"Peace," exclaimed Sir Walter, loudly and authoritatively. "To whose troop do you belong?" he asked, addressing the soldier.

"To the Earl of Suffolk's," replied one of the men, doggedly.

"That is enough," replied Sir Walter. "Fall back to the end of the room, I will attend to you presently. One of you get some water, this damsel is in a swoon."

"And this maiden also," said Wat. "Bullfric, you know the premises—fetch some as speedily as you can; and you, John Chandos, tell me the meaning of this sudden change in affairs to what it was when I left.'

Bullfric hastened out of the room, and John Chandos, who was yet panting for breath with the exertions he had made, said—

"I know little more than yourself. Two hours or so after you and your friend had quitted, we entered, by desire of the old goldsmith, the room from which we were released just now; while he, his granddaughter, and Bullfric's wife, went, as he said, to prepare us a repast, which was brought to us, and of which we partook. When we had finished, the eatables were removed, and we were left by ourselves over some wine—the old man professing to have some important matters to transact, and the females some domestic duties. They had not been away a short

hour, when we heard the heavy tread of armed men in one of the corridors. We sprung to the door, and found that it was locked on the outside, and though soon after we heard shrieks, and might guess what was about to take place, we could not force the door; there was not a material of any weight or substance that we did not employ to break our way out, but in vain; and when roused up to a state of rage I never recollect to have reached, your friend arrived and released us—that is all I know of the matter."

"Aye," said Michael, "it was lucky I thought of a secret spring, or I should have been unable to have got you out. There was no sign of lock or fastening whatever; but remembering that Bullfric admitted us by a secret spring, when we first came, I searched all round the fillet of the door, and found a small knob, which, pressing hard, had the effect of making the door fly open, and of bringing all the prisoners, like a nest of hornets, upon me at once. Thanks to my lungs, and the aid of my sword, I saved myself being cut down, instead of embraced, for having done a good action."

"It was hard at such a moment to distinguish friend from foe," observed John Chandos, "and indeed, I was scarce in the mood; however, it was done; and it shall go hard but the disobedient rascals shall have their due. I have served with the Earl of Suffolk, and know his notions of discipline and obedience to orders: the caitiffs will smart for their conduct, or I am no Englishman."

"I hope you won't be too hard with us, my noble commander," exclaimed one of the men deprecatingly, advancing to Sir Walter Manny. "We came here without knowing we were doing wrong; we were brought by him who lays bleeding there to revenge the death of one of your troop, that was all; we could not help being deceived, and I am sure that you will take into consideration that we threw down our arms the moment we knew who you were."

"Little consideration, is due, you rascals, for that," observed Sir Walter; "it strikes me that I am more indebted to the sudden aid of my friends, than to any remembrance on your parts of my command over ye; besides, here stands a 'squire of mine who *was* recognised by you; there appeared to me no desire on your parts to throw down your arms upon discovering who he was; on the contrary, an accelerated desire to proceed in your villany."

"We did not know he was your 'squire," returned the man; "he has not been made known as such, and we were taught to believe that he took the character without any right, in order to make a prey of the women, and keep the booty all to himself. We were told that he and his friends, all new comers, had turned out and slain some of our best and boldest comrades; and all we came here for was to support old friends, and turn the tables on those who were strangers to us, if it was only for the honour of the troop."

"And in a very honourable, chivalric fashion you commenced supporting the honour of your troop," returned Sir Walter, scornfully. "However, there is no excuse for disobedience of orders, and you must take consequences; fall back to your place. My good smith, remove those bodies at once from the room; and do you, Michael, discover where that fellow, Bullfric is loitering with the water."

Both orders were immediately obeyed, and in a few minutes Bullfric and Michael returned, the one bearing a torch, and the other a metal basin containing water, the contents of which, as soon as obtained, were sprinkled over the swooned females. Such attentions as the unpractised young men could bestow upon them, were tenderly and unceasingly paid, and were crowned with the satisfaction of being successful. Katrine was the first to revive, and when she could sufficiently understand her situation, as well as that there was nothing more to fear, she shook off the effects of her late fright and syncope, and exerting herself with the rapid application of her best energies, a power almost peculiar to woman, she directed her attentions to Rubacelle, and in a short time succeeded in reviving her, and in restoring her to perfect consciousness. At first the sight of the armed men by whom she was surrounded, seen by the red glare of the torch, had nearly the effect of producing a relapse; but the soothing and encouraging words of Katrine infused confidence in her, and, for the second time, she became aware that she was delivered from a fearful strait by friends who were in every other sense strangers to her. Upon so far recovering as to perceive and trace the features of those around, she found herself being supported in the arms of Wat Tyler; in an instant the recollection flowed upon her mind of seeing him burst through her terrible oppressors, at a moment when in her frenzy she believed even Heaven had deserted her, of falling into his arms, and being conscious of nothing beyond the knowledge that he was once more risking his life in the defence of one of whom he nothing knew more than that she was a helpless, defenceless girl, agonized with wild despair, in a position of desperate danger. And honour to him now and for ever, he had, despite of numbers, merciless foes, the almost certain prospect of incurring a violent death, come right nobly and fearlessly to her aid! these were the first thoughts which crowded through her mind upon recovering, and in the enthusiasm of the moment, overcome by the deep sense of gratitude she felt for her deliverance, she, with no second thought pervading her innocent mind, pressed him warmly to her heart, and leaning her head upon his breast, burst into a passion of tears.

There was something in this little act that went direct to Wat's heart; he comprehended at once the full value of such an acknowledgment of his services, and felt entirely and completely rewarded by that simple spontaneous effusion of her thankfulness for all he had done; it made the water rush into his eyes, and he was forcibly reminded of Violet, if he could be reminded of one who was never absent from his memory.

There is a tacit way of acknowledging a benefit conferred, which protestations and loud thanks never reach; a method which is understood by the dullest capacity, and as such, the most desirable and gratifying mode of repayment, except to the selfish crew who perform the favour for the sake of hearing their liberality lauded by the mouths of others. The impulse of Rubacelle was appreciated by Wat more highly than though her tongue had called all the saints to witness her sense of the extent of her obligation to him, and would have amply repaid him had his services far excelled what they really were; he could not refrain from returning her gentle embrace, of congratulating her upon her escape, and of offering such consolatory language as he thought would restore her mind to something like equanimity—a matter in which John Chandos found an interest in lending his aid; which, although it would be injustice to say was not kindly received, was not met with anything like the attention she paid to all that fell from the lips of Wat Tyler.

As soon as something like calmness reigned among them, Wat sought of Katrine an explanation of the extraordinary scene which presented itself upon their arrival, which she gave, by stating that the old miser, Grubhen l'Eschelle, being horridly alarmed that his guests, notwithstanding the services they had ren-

dered him, and the promise made to him that his wealth should remain untouched by them, had horrid misgivings that it would be shorn of its fair proportions by a tax upon it, which they would take some opportunity of levying. He had, therefore, come to the determination of removing it from their reach while they were engaged in drinking, employing some secret agency of which he was possessed, and to secure himself from interruption, had fastened them into the room in which they were discovered by Michael. He had planned also to make Rubacelle and Katrine secrete themselves in a soutterain, which had been formed when the house was built, in the event of any emergency similar to the one on account of which he was about to employ it.

The old man did not hesitate, after he had secured his guests, to disclose his scheme to them, and tell his grandchild and his nurse they should there remain until the army had left Cadsant, and taken her guests with it. They remonstrated strongly with him upon his ingratitude, but in vain. His wealth was a consideration that o'ertopped all others, and, think what they pleased, he would persist in his resolution.

In the midst of their argument they heard a sudden cry, too like a death shriek to be doubted, come on their ears from the porter's ante-chamber; it was loud, long, and full of agony; it made their blood cold, and, for a moment, completely paralysed them. Their discussion was instantly suspended, for added to it, they heard the hurried tread of heavy feet, heard the clank of arms, and before they could recover from the alarm into which they were thrown, the door of the apartment they were in flew open, and soldiers, headed by Hardgrasp's comrade, rushed in; it was in vain they screamed, it was in vain they appealed to their humanity — it was in vain they implored their mercy. The ruthless villains answered them with taunts—with derisive laughs; horrified them to distraction by cutting down and slaughtering the miserable old goldsmith, upon his refusing to lead them to his hoard of wealth, and then coolly drawing lots for the females, unheeding the appeals which were made in the bitterest despair and anguish to them; and when their villanous lottery was decided, seized their victims, regardless of every tie sacred to humanity, to have them at the critical moment torn from their grasp, when it seemed that all hope had fled.

Upon Katrine's explanation being finished, and thanks reiterated by her and Rubacelle for the timely aid afforded them, Sir Walter inquired whether Grubhen l'Eschelle had left any relative beside Rubacelle, to which Katrine replied in the negative; and he continued the interrogatory by making inquiries respecting his wealth—in what form it existed—and whether there were possessions independent of the house and grounds upon which it stood. This was a question which she could not answer; and, in fact, which perhaps the miser alone could have enlighted them upon. The only man who could have given them any information on the subject, viz., the old porter, was slain. Katrine, however, said that she believed the whole, or nearly all of the quarter of Cadsant in which they lived, belonged to him; that his wealth consisted as much in coin as in articles of workmanship, and that whatever he could own in that form she was satisfied was upon the premises.

Sir Walter having thanked her, advised her and Rubacelle—to prevent any chance of being again molested or endangered—to place themselves beneath his protection, and return with him to his quarters, which were fixed in a large mansion, the inhabitants of which, many of them females, were not dispossessed, and he would send some people upon whom he could depend to clear the whole of the wealth from the premises, send it to England—have the vessels and various articles, wrought in gold and silver, disposed of, and the money they brought given up, with all now in the house, in chests, save one-fifth for King Edward, to Rubacelle, and secured, incapable of being touched by any one else, to her.

They gladly availed themselves of this kind offer, and leaving Leowulf and Mark Grayling in possession of the house, he marshalled the unarmed soldiers in a rank, and placing himself at their head, bade them follow him. Such was the force of discipline, that they obeyed without a murmur or a contrary movement; albeit, they knew they had incurred the punishment of a degrading death, and by following him, would, in all probality, meet with it.

Wat Tyler, leading Rubacelle, who clung to him, and seemed to feel as if she were safe with none but him, walked close by Sir Walter, accompanied by John Chandos; who, although he would much rather she had shown the preference for him instead of Wat, yet felt neither jealous nor offended with our hero, because his good deeds had purchased him this, to him, enviable preference. Katrine and Bullfric brought up the rear, and in this order they quitted the mansion, with which three had had their acquaintance for years, the remainder only hours, for ever.

They were not long in gaining Sir Walter's quarters, and through the generous and delicate attentions with which his conduct was characterised, he procured the females every accommodation and comfort they could desire. John Chandos handed over the men to the custody of an officer of the Earl of Suffolk's troop, and then returning to Sir Walter, by desire, he accompanied the knight, Wat Tyler, Bullfric, and a dozen picked men back to the miser's dwelling, and then visited every room, searched every hole, corner, secret hiding-place, store-room, closet, subterraneous apartments, and, in fact, every spot where it was likely he would have secreted portions of his wealth. They prosecuted their scrutiny with the most untiring perseverance; but the morning sun had quitted the horizon before they had completed their task, and even then there were parts which a want of time compelled them to pass over, and which, in all probability, contained articles of value; but they had already discovered enough to amount to an enormous fortune, and grew less desirous, after their great exertions, of obtaining all he really possessed. They found in one chamber a large quantity of empty chests piled one upon another, and had been evidently originally employed in transmitting the massive plate from place to place; they were now once more put into requisition again, and everything valuable movable upon which they could lay their hands was carefully packed and sent to Sir Walter's quarters.

Sir Walter Manny, as the reader will remember, explained to Wat Tyler the cause of the expedition to Cadsant, while they were on their way to it, and now made known the strict orders he had received from Edward, in case of his success in conquering the island, that it should be destroyed. Unlike many of the rude warriors of the period he possessed—

> "A tear for pity, and a hand
> Open as the day for melting charity."

He therefore, instead of barbarously at once setting fire to the town, gave the inhabitants a day's notice; at the expirtaion of which period, if they had not quitted, they must submit to the consequences. They were, however, allowed to carry away all their property, save one-fifth, which became the property of

Edward, which Sir Walter judiciously levied, either in money or in articles of gold and silver, save to the very poorer class, who were allowed to take with them all they possessed, if in their power to do so; and as soon as the proclamation was issued, the inhabitants might be seen in all directions making the best use of their time. It was the intention of Sir Walter and the Earl of Derby to send a portion of the forces to England in charge of the booty, and with the remainder to proceed to Brabant, and await there Edward's commands. They shrewdly anticipated a war with France to follow this expedition to Cadsant, and were well aware that if such an event did take place, Edward would immediately join them, in truth, he had given them secret instructions to that effect: they, therefore, made such arrangements as to include every command which Edward had, counting upon the success of certain events given them. Towards the evening of the day following their attack upon Cadsant, Sir Walter, after having a long conference with the Earl of Derby upon the course they were about to pursue, sent for Wat Tyler to his apartments. Wat soon arrived, and when he appeared, Sir Walter, who seemed in a thoughtful mood when he entered, smiled and held out his hand to him, saying, as he shook his hand—

"I have been thinking, Wat, upon the difference in real value there is between a man who can boast of nobility of nature alone for his position in society, and he who prides himself upon nobility of birth for his station. It seems that society and I view the question through different mediums, for I feel prouder to grasp your hand, knowing you to have won a place among the noblest by your actions, although the opportunity I have had of judging of them has been so short, than I should be to have for my dearest friend a Prince of the Blood, who rested his worth on his descent only. Good deeds beget nobility of station, and good deeds alone make worthy men. Yet, it seems, custom hath another manner of distinguishing those whom their fellow men should respect, by holding up for worship and esteem those who have long titles or longer purses. This, as I have told you, is not the case with me, and, as we know each other better, you shall find I speak not unadvisedly. I care not for a friend whose aid and counsel, unbiassed by any prejudice, particularly of position, I cannot call on and depend upon at all or any time. Friends are scarce where troubles are plenty; but I look for one of the few, who, when the trouble comes, stands by me as unflinchingly as you did yester-eve when at cut-and-thrust with those knaves who surrounded us. You look surprised, Wat, at the tenor of my words, and, I can perceive, art wondering within thyself to what, in heaven's name, this can all tend. Thou shalt hear. But first I will tell thee I hold thee as one of the friends whom I esteem most desirable, nor want a year to discover what a moment can decide. Your birth, pardon me if I am too abrupt, is one which, so it is considered, does not entitle you to be companion with those who hold the same rank as myself, unless you hold at least the rank of an esquire. That such an understood rule would have no weight with me, I am convinced you believe; but that it would be the case with others I am not prepared to advance; but as I would not have you even looked upon with an eye of contumely by those who, though higher in station, are not worth, in my estimation, to hold thy stirrup, I have determined thou should'st to-night be inaugurated, before the whole of my troop, and such of the army as can attend, as my preux esquire."

"I shall be too proud of the honour to make the common remark respecting unworthiness," returned Wat, speaking in tones of emotion; "independent of any other feeling, I am assured that, were I any way unworthy, you are yourself too much the soul of honour to raise me to such a post. That I thank you heartily and sincerely for the offers of your friendship my deeds shall prove, and that you shall have no cause to blush for your esquire, my love for Violet, and the strong hope that I shall one day wrest from the mouth of fame a honourable mention of my name, shall be your best guarantee."

"My faith in you is too strong to doubt it, Wat," observed Sir Walter, when Wat, with a glowing face, and eyes which sparked like diamonds, had ceased—"And now I will tell you why I came to this sudden resolution of inaugurating you to-night. I had intended that it should have taken place as soon as possible, but did not think it could be done thus early, until I determined it should, in defiance of all obstacles. The Lord Lewis Beauchamp has not long quitted me, in order to beg a member of my troop to instal as his esquire, in the place of his own, who was slain in yesterday's conflict. I gave my consent willingly, but judge my surprise when he named thy friend, Michael Rycheart.

"Michael!" echoed Wat, astonishedly.

"Aye," replied Sir Walter; "I was no less surprised than you appear to be: he noticed it, and misjudging the cause, attributed it to a feeling disparaging to honest Michael; he espoused his cause warmly, I should say nobly, detailed his manly conduct in his quarrel with Rupert of Tonbridge, as well as his behaviour in the field, read me a lecture, to the effect that honour dependeth not upon condition, and concluded by observing, that many a gilded escutcheoned surcoat concealed a heart immeasurably inferior to his. As I had some cause to side with him in his opinion of Michael, I hesitated not to approve the choice he had made, and gave my willing consent to his request, for which he returned me many thanks; at the same time alluded to you, who, he was well aware, was on terms of close intimacy with Michael. He took occasion to speak handsomely of you, and supposed that, although you were under my banner as a private trooper, you were of honourable, meaning titled birth, because of the friendship existing between us; and informed me that such was the received opinion among the knights, who watched our intimacy with eyes of considerable curiosity, at least inasmuch as you were concerned, and concluded, that unless such was the case we should not be the friends we are. I told Sir Lewis the truth, and dropping much of the haughty dignity he had borne through our conference, he begged to congratulate me upon possessing principles which inclined me to look to merit, and not to titles or nobility of birth, as the standard by which to judge and make my friends. A little more passed between us, and he departed.

"When he had quitted me, in revolving in my mind what he had said, his remarks respecting you made me remember that, unfortunately, all men have not the high and liberal opinions which grace Lord Lewis, as well as that many knights do not view men with my eyes, and are apt to treat with coolness, if not contumely, all who have not the good fortune to be so well born as themselves, or of an equal station. To prevent, therefore, the chance of your encountering the pain of any slight their weakness may induce them to visit you with, I have resolved that, as early to-day as the ceremony can be performed, you shall be duly created my esquire, beyond the possibility of a doubt; and as soon as you are eligible by age, you will, I am assured, be dubbed, in all probability, by Edward himself, a knight. There is no need of a word, good Wat; meet

me an hour hence at the Earl of Derby's quarters, and be prepared for that which will remove you from all chance of being ever again styled a self-made squire."

He held out his hand as he concluded; Wat grasped it warmly, and without trusting himself to say all he felt, he quitted the room. He returned to Michael, whom he had left when Sir Walter summoned him, and related to him all that Sir Walter had told him relative to the request made by Lord Lewis, which Michael listened to patiently until Wat had concluded; he then asked,

"But if made the squire of Lord Lewis, I shall always fight beneath his banner?"

"Of course," replied Wat, "you know a squire's duty?"

"No, I do not," returned Michael. "What is it?"

"You will have to wait upon him closely," replied Wat, "clean and keep in repair his arms, help to equip him for the field, and remain by his side; carve before him at table, attend to the guests, bring water to them to wash, and attend them to their chambers; in short, everything, save matters of a dishonourable character, that he may require of you."

"That is to say, be his servant," said Michael.

"True," returned Wat, "but always bearing in mind that the office being borne with a noble and worthy object, is removed from any taint of sordid servitude. The acts performed are looked upon in the light of the affectionate services rendered by a son to his father, and the true probation each knight must pass, ere he is deemed competent and worthy the honours of knighthood.

"And you are to be the squire of Sir Walter Manny, and do the same for him?" inquired Michael.

"Exactly," answered Wat.

"Then, if I accept Lord Lewis's offer, it will be a matter of chance whither we meet often?"

"Certainly; but that will not weaken our friendship."

"No, it will take something rather worse than that, I know, but it will make me decline the offer of Lord Lewis."

"You will not be so foolish, Michael?"

"Indeed I shall, Wat; although I did not come with you, I am with you and will remain with you until we return, or—God forbid!—death divides us."

"You forget, Michael, the honour of the position you will obtain. You forget you will be equal in station to one of noble birth; that you will have knighthood in your grasp, and may achieve fortune and favours which, as you are now situate, you cannot hope to attain.

"I would rather lose them than you, Wat. Companions, nay, brothers, from boyhood, we have been undivided by any circumstances, until my headstrong conduct lately occasioned a separation, but only for a short time; I will take care it does not occur again. I am only ambitious for you, Wat; you were always my superior in all things, but I was never grieved at my inferiority, for it seemed natural for you to be better than me, or any one at Brenchley. You be the squire if one of us is to be one, and if a squire can have a squire, let me be yours, only don't you make one in causing our separation. You know, Wat, that next to Flora and my mother, there is no one on earth I have the affection for I have for you, nor is there anything I would not gladly do for you. The only consolation I have, in being away from Flora, is being with you, and I feel no honours of station would compensate for my losing your companionship. So, with many thanks to Lord Lewis for his good opinion of me, and for his very kind offer, I must beg to decline the honour which he intended me."

"Do not be too hasty, Michael," interposed Wat: "remember you are giving away the chance of fortune and of fame; if it be but for Flora's sake, do not forego all chance of raising your station. I esteem your motive highly, as far as I am concerned; but with the same regard for you which you have shown for me, I should be sorry if you were to sacrifice all your future prospects merely to be in companionship with me."

"I am fixed upon it," persisted Michael; "I should be less inclined to wed Flora than when I left England, if I thought change of station would indnce her to make any distinction in her conduct to me, or feel angry with me for pursuing the path I mean to take. But I know she will say and think I have done right, and would rather see me plain Michael Rycheart, her little sweetheart as a child, her lover as a youth, and her husband when a man, than if I had all the titles in Christendom at my back. Flora is not what I take her for, if she would not be as happy with me as I am—aye, happier than if I was Emperor of the world."

"Very likely," said Wat; "but do you think she would be less happy, because you were upon a level with those whom birth had originally made higher than you—a position to which your merits only had raised you? Do you think she would be less happy to hear your name mentioned with praise by many whose tongues would be silent respecting numbers who have escutcheons, with many quarterings and proud appendages to their family name, or indifferent that in being allied to you, she shared the honour you had reaped? Think you, if she did not love you more, she would love you less for winning honours and gallant distinctions for her to partake of—"

"It's of no use, Wat," interrupted Michael, earnestly, "I will not be persuaded; recollect Flora is not Violet, nor am I you. I know the ambition that possesses you—you would be a god, that she might be a goddess, and such a feeling sits well on you, but not on me. I am not by nature suited for high station—you are. I have not the ambition or the means to support it—you have both. My only ambition while from Flora is to be with you, and I am. Why, therefore, should I change a situation I most strenuously desire for one I care nought about? Let me share all the dangers and evils that befall you, and know of the good fortune that elevates you—it is all I ask. Let me have my own way in this, and I shall be happy."

"You are a singular, but a warm-hearted worthy friend, Michael," exclaimed Wat, fervently; "and though I should feel more satisfied if I could overcome your scruples and see you what I wish you to be, nevertheless, since your wishes are so strongly in the opposite direction, I will not seek to change them, nor will I forget that friendship and devotion for me is the primary cause of your denying what more than three-fourths of the world would leap greedily at."

Few more words passed after the preceding colloquy, and the hour appointed by Sir Walter being up, Wat, accompanied by Michael, wended his way to the quarters of the Earl of Derby, where he was received by Sir Walter, and greeted with respect and friendliness by a number of knights and warriors, boasting a proud descent; this the friendship of Sir Walter Manny had achieved, aided by the respect which was ever paid to gallantry, and which, in the presence of all who were there assembled, Wat had so fairly earned. After a few preliminaries had been gone

through, they all adjourned to a chapel near, which was filled with soldiers, citizens, and no few ladies, among whom were Rubacelle and Katrine. Prayers adapted to the occasion were then said, and then Wat Tyler, divested of all his weapons, approached the altar, upon which was laid a sword and girdle: he was accompanied by Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Derby—each bearing a lighted torch—who, in the absence of father and mother, or two near relations, were his sponsors; they there pledged themselves for his eligibility, his honour, and his rectitude; they then knelt down while the mass of the Holy Ghost was performed. When it was concluded, the ministering priest gave a sermon upon the duties of an esquire: in which he was called upon most solemnly, at all times, strictly and undeviatingly, to cherish in his heart the love of God and the ladies; it was impressed upon him, that it was essential to perform no adventure, no undertaking whose nature was important, without first preparing himself by prayer and devotional exercises, and then never to turn back, or sully his name or the noble profession he followed, by any act of cowardice or dishonour, but to die rather; and to bear deeply in his mind, that as he valued his honour, as he hoped to be deemed a preux-chevalier, as he looked forward for glory and distinction, he was never, under any circumstances, to think or speak of the fair sex with looseness, indifference, or disrespect; or, failing in this command, he was to be considered a recreant to his order, unknightly, and to be despised by all men. He was to esteem it the proudest honour his profession was endowed with, to be enabled to assist and release them from danger and evil straits, or to avenge whatever wrongs they had suffered, by whomsoever inflicted, not exempting the highest in the land.

When this sermon was concluded, the minister asked Wat several customary questions relative to his purpose in becoming a squire, which he answered modestly, but satisfactorily, and then the priest took up the sword and girdle, pronounced a benediction over them, girt them about Wat's waist, and in the eyes of all men, henceforward, he was indisputably, to all intents and purposes a squire, and what was a great addition to the honour, a squire of the noblest, bravest, most chivalric knight that existed at that period or ever since. As soon as the ceremony was over, knights and squires pressed round Wat, to congratulate him, while several fair hands showered down flowers upon him; his heart throbbed almost to bursting with excitement, his eyes were dim, he felt giddy, and could scarce hear the words addressed to him; by a strong effort he, however, mastered the weakness, and looked upon the thronging faces around with a swelling breast, and the proud feeling passed through him that the day would yet come which should see him go through a like ceremony for a higher honour.

Among all the eyes that looked flatteringly upon him, there were none which would have given him such unmingled delight as those of Violet, had they been there; in the proudest moment, when the priest was girding his sword round him, and there were murmurs of applause on all sides, he thought of her, and felt the honour lose somewhat of its value in being performed without her being present; he knew how she would have gloried in any honour or reward which might be presented to him; knew that she would be most glad even to hear of it, but he thought had she been there to have seen the manner in which he had been invested with his present honour, he should have felt far prouder; as it was he felt that he was elevated into a new station, into a higher region, another sphere, but whatever loftiness of feeling he had gained it was that of principle only, if, before, he would not have done an evil or dishonourable action for a large amount, he would not now for worlds; if, before, he had felt inclined under great hazards to be the friend of the defenceless maiden, and do his best to relieve her from wrong, distress, or oppression, he felt now bound by a law imperative to do so as a duty under the penalty of bringing upon himself disgrace and ignominy, which to him would be a thousand times worse than death.

The noble and disinterested friendship of Sir Walter Manny had made him a squire, and as he was an entire stranger to all who surrounded him, save his three friends from Brenchley, he was an object of eager curiosity. He could easily perceive that in the friendship so readily from all sides proffered him, there was as much consideration in his being a friend of Sir Walter's, as there was in his being a new squire and a fresh acquaintance. He could see the benefit arising from the distinction of birth, but as he viewed it in its proper light, there was little fear that the step he had taken would change the frankness or the worth of his nature, and it was evidenced by his conduct to Michael, who, among those who stepped forward to congratulate him, was one of the first. Wat took his hand—albeit there were several others stretched out, whose owners were decked with emblazoned surcoats—and pressing it warmly, said to him—

"It is not too late to retract your determination, Michael. Lord Lewis knows not as yet that you decline his offer; if you will alter your mind ere he approaches, you may place yourself at once in the position to receive from me the congratulations you now so kindly present me with."

"No, Wat," returned Michael, squeezing his hand; "I was never meant by nature to wear titles. I could not go through the ceremony you have just done to be made an earl: say no more about it—let me remain as I am—I'll fight for you, die for you, an' you need it; but I'll not be made a squire even for you."

Wat laughed and promised to press the matter no further. Lord Lewis was, however, much disappointed at Michael's determination, when, on making his way to him, he proposed the matter to him, and acquainted him with the permission granted by Sir Walter for his exchange. He could not understand Michael's motive, and endeavoured to make him see the real value of the position in his grasp; but failed in moving him to consent or in getting from him more than a respectful denial. He, therefore, ceased urging him, and retired chagrined and disconcerted, that he, a noble famed for honour and deeds of high chivalric daring, should fail in persuading one who was by birth but a villager—who was but a private trooper—to accept the honour, for such it was esteemed, and such, at the period, it undoubtedly was, of being his esquire, at a time, too, when those who were noble in the land were soliciting the favor of him for their sons, he felt inclined to be angry with himself for offering where there was a possibility of being refused; and, to do him justice, he never dreamed that Michael would decline an honour he could scarcely, even by the bravest deeds, hope to obtain—and, offended with Michael for being such a fool to refuse, he called up his hauteur, a practice with him when annoyed by any circumstances over which he had no control, and bowing stiffly he quitted the chapel with long strides.

Sir Walter Manny, the Earl of Derby, Wat, and Michael, accompanied by a large number of knights and their squires, followed. Just as Wat reached the

door of the chapel, a white hand was str tched forth tremblingly, and a bouquet of flowers was presented to him; as he took them he looked in the face of the giver, and beheld Rubacelle; he smiled thankfully as he recognised her, pressed it gallantly to his lips, and then placed it in his belt. She bent her head low—it might have been to conceal her blushing face from the many admiring eyes that were gazing upon it—it might have been to conceal the emotion which Wat's reception of her little gift had upon her, or to hide a throng of tears that suddenly found their way to her eyes from some cause known only to herself. Be it as it may, she scarce had turned her sweet face to the ground, when a voice muttered just so close to Wat's ear, that he caught the words,—

"Now, by my halidame! but I would that my inaguration as squire had to come again, or that the hour of my knighthood had arrived, that those eyes might be turned upon the ceremony, and that hand present me with a flower-offering; but Dame Fortune is not so kind, hang her! and all I can do is to indulge in empty wishes."

Wat looked at the speaker—it was John Chandos; their eyes met, and Wat could not help smiling at the serious and almost rueful aspect the squire wore. John Chandos observed him, and edging his way nearer, whispered—

"Ah, you may smile; you have everything to smile for—Dame Fortune, the Jezabel, is in love with you to my disparagement. You had the best fortune in the field yesterday; you were the first to defend the fair maiden whose favour your belt bears; I, of course, arrived just afterwards; and you again saved her when I was locked up, and, as usual, I arrived when I was too late to be of service; and now, when I would part with my ears for a small token of her good opinion, I am not successful enough to get even a look, while you get a handful of flowers."

"Nay," returned Wat, laughing at his sally; "you are not yet too late for either a look or a flower; nor were you too late yesterday to do good service in the field, or in her grandsire's residence."

"Pish!" exclaimed John Chandos; "not too late! How am I to get a look or flower, when the maiden is no longer visible?"

"Gone!" exclaimed Wat, with surprise, turning to the spot where he had the moment previous seen Rubacelle, and had purposed speaking to her.

"Aye," replied John Chandos; "gone, most veritably gone—vanished, like a short summer—flowers and all—ere you hardly know you have been visited by it."

Rubacelle had gone; nor were there any traces of her, although Wat looked earnestly among the surrounding faces for her. He thought it strange; but his attention was soon diverted from it by being addressed by several who—having met him at Sir Walter's quarters, fought near him in the battle, or had otherwise in his brief career as a soldier crossed his path—claimed his acquaintance.

How true is the saying, that fortune makes friends! Wat Tyler, the friend and squire of Sir Walter Manny, treated as an equal by the Earl of Derby, would in that large assemblage have found it a difficult matter to have picked out one who would have denied him friendship, attention, or, did he need it, assistance in any shape. Yet had that same Wat Tyler stood there as a village youth, as the known son of a tiler in a small hamlet, unfriended by the generous Hainaulter, unnoticed by the gallant earl, yet possessing all the attributes which make man an honour to his species, ennobles human nature until it assumes a god-like form, he would have discovered it to be as difficult to find one stand forward and profess the warm disposition to serve him, which now they did, knowing him only in the light of one who was their equal as a soldier, had noble friends, but of whose principles, as one worthy to be their friend, they nothing knew; of this he was pretty well aware, and therefore did not suffer that which appeared so flattering to affect him beyond what was due to it.

Having quitted the chapel, he returned to the quarters of Sir Walter Manny, which, be they what they might, were henceforward to be his; and then bidding Michael, whose quarters were with the troop at the haven, farewell for the night, he prepared to enter upon his duties. Sir Walter, however, dispensed with them, and bade him seek repose, an order with which he was not loath to comply—for since he had left England, his share of sleep had been but small. The room appropriated to his use was not an extensive one, but it was comfortable in its appointments, and he was not slow in employing them. He divested himself of his armour and under-clothing, threw himself upon his bed, and in a few minutes was dreaming that he was sitting on the little bank prankt with flowers upon the borders of the wood at Brenchley, with Violet, and that he was gazing in her eyes and listening to her voice, as it fell like fairy music upon his ears with a quiet calm delight which invested him with supreme happiness. Once he awoke, fancied he heard a sigh, and saw a face hanging over him, but on opening his eyes and shaking off his drowsiness he looked attentively and close round, the bright moon was shining full into the room, but all was quiet and still, and he concluded that what he had heard and seen was but mere fancy. He closed his eyes and was soon again buried in profound sleep.

It was broad day-light when he awoke. He hastily dressed himself, and with a quick pace sought Sir Walter's apartment. He found him attired, save his armour, which Wat assisted him in putting on, and when equipped they waited upon the Earl of Derby, at his quarters; after a conference, and the completion of their dispatches, Ulfred was summoned, and the parchments placed in his hands with the necessary orders respecting them. They then departed to the shore, where all was bustle and commotion. Troops were hurrying on board the respective vessels assigned to them; packages, bales, articles of all descriptions, booty from the conquered town, were being conveyed on board; sailors were busy in receiving the cargoes, and in getting the vessels ready for sea. The hoarse voices of the different officers commanding their men, added to the noise which the tramping of soldiers, and their laughing and chatting, created. At length, all who were to sail for England were on board—the cargoes were stowed away. Ulfred, with the dispatches, was in the ship destined to bear him, but Rupert was left behind, under the care of Sir Walter who had promised that his wounds should be properly attended to, and that he should not be any further a sufferer by his thoughtlessness.

The wind was fair—the signal for sailing was given—the anchors were weighed—the sails spread out and filled, and away they went. As soon as they began to diminish in the distance, Sir Walter and the Earl of Derby summoned a troop, and marching through the streets, had the various houses searched, in order to see whether, in defiance of the proclamation, any of the inhabitants still remained; but in the belief that it was the intention of those who issued the proclamation to keep their word, the whole of the inhabitants had disappeared, and of all who had dwelled there, numbers who had graced Wat's inauguration, who would not have missed the sight, which was soon

bruited abroad, on any consideration, not a vestige remained. When the circuit of the city had been performed, and they had partaken of a repast, they prepared for their last act in Cadsant, and then for their departure for Brabant. The houses which outskirted the town were the first upon which they commenced their work of devastation. The troops were provided with torches, and as soon as the order was given to fire the town, they spread themselves over it, burning and destroying everything that came in their way. The houses which were old, and, with but few exceptions, built almost entirely of wood, caught

the flames speedily, and roared and crackled and burned with amazing rapidity, quickly taking the task out of the hands of the troops, by communicating the flames from one to another with a speed which was as surprising as it was awful. As the fire travelled towards the quarters of the Earl of Derby, his troops were put in motion, and he, in company with Sir Walter Manny, prepared to join them, before the fast-spreading flames rendered a retreat precipitate.

Previous to the departure of the vessels for England, Wat Tyler had endeavoured to persuade Rubacelle to sail thither with the wealth which had been rescued for her from the miser's house. Bullfric had offered his services to see her safe there, take his wife with him, and look after the money—an offer which Wat thought acceptable, as Katrine was to be of the party, and he was satisfied the money might be so placed, that, if Bullfric attempted to gain possession dishonestly of any portion, he would burn his fingers. Rubacelle, however, refused, and to his surprise, that one seemingly so gentle should exhibit such firmness, with such a determination to carry her point, that he found it vain to persist in his persuasions. She told him that she had friends in Brabant, and to Brabant she would go, taking advantage of the safe escort which the journeying of the troops would give her. Wat, who saw nothing in this resolve more than a desire on her part to go to a place where she had friends, in preference to one where all were strangers to her, thought little more about it, than to mention it to Sir Walter, who, with the gallantry and kindness which distinguished his character, consented to her accompanying them, and set apart half a dozen men as a guard for her and Katrine, who, finding that she would not go to England, resolved to go to Brabant with her. Bullfric, on the contrary, finding "metal more attractive," in the gold belonging to Rubacelle, accompanied it to England in the character of a steward; Wat having, with the aid of Sir Walter, so arranged and disposed of it, that there was no fear or opportunity of peculation. Bullfric was given to understand as much; but as there was, to his knowledge, more ways of destroying life than hanging, he hugged himself in the fond hope that by judicious contrivances he should get something more than a little competency out of the vast amount of wealth he had in his charge.

When all was arranged, and the fire had taken completely hold of the town, it was abandoned. Out of the six hundred men at arms, and the two thousand archers that had set out from London on the expedition to Cadsant, the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter retained two hundred men at arms and eight hundred archers; the rest, save those who were slain in the conflict, were dispatched to England. The afternoon had somewhat advanced when they departed, and they made towards Ghent, in the hope of reaching it before midnight. As they journeyed on, they looked ever and anon behind them, to watch the flames as they rose high in the air, and poured forth dense volumes of smoke, which hung like a cloud over the devoted town, for there was little or no wind to move it thence. The country was low and flat, and possessed but little scenery to interest or divert their attention. After they had been some time marching, and a necessity no longer existed for the personal superintendance of the commanders, they joined company, and to beguile the time, entered into conversation with Rubacelle and Katrine. John Chandos, who was squire to the Earl, and Wat, in the like capacity to Sir Walter, rode together, all formality being banished—for it should be known that the greater proportion of squires were by birth the equals of the highest in the army, being of noble families, passing their probation to become knights; and thus it was that John Chandos, of noble family, hesitated not to frankly take his share of the conversation. Some questions which Sir Walter put to Rubacelle, respecting her future intentions upon her arrival at Brabant, excited his curiosity, and he edged his steed as near as he could, in order that he might hear her reply. She, however, gave no decided answer, as if she had determined upon nothing but the resolve of carrying any intention she might form into effect, in spite of all opposition, should any be offered.

"You have then the strength of mind to adhere to a resolution when you have made it?" said Sir Walter.

"I have," was her emphatic reply.

"Nor would suffer any inducement whatever to make you forego it?"

"I believe I should form no determination with the intention of keeping it, against which inducements could exist of such a nature as to tell me I ought not to have formed it," replied Rubacelle; "such has been the principle of the lessons inculcated in me by my dear friend, Katrine, and I trust they have not been sown in a barren soil."

"Or that they will be wasted after having yielded such a good crop," said Katrine.

"I trust they will not," replied Rubacelle. "I think they will not, and I have resolved they shall not," she added with a smile, dropping her eyes.

We shall see how she kept her word.

"Then if you would but fall in love with one of us—say me, for instance," said John Chandos, looking at her with an expression which meant 'say me, *for certain*;" "and were to say you would have me if I would have you—nothing would change you?"

"*If* you would have the fair maiden, John!" laughed the Earl of Derby, "Beshrew me, but I should have never thought of an *if*, had I proposed the question."

"I did not mean if," said John Chandos, confused at the general laugh; "I meant to say that—of course I would; but what I intended to ask was, whether she would have me; and if she would say yes, why nobody else would have me—that is, I mean she would not let any body else—"

"Have you?" anticipated Sir Walter; at which the laugh was renewed.

"No, no!" said John Chandos, hastily. "I mean that she would suffer nobody to persuade her not to have me, in which I think she would be perfectly right; don't you, Wat Tyler?"

"It depends upon circumstances," answered Wat.

"Circumstances!" echoed John Chandos; "what circumstances?"

"In the first place, whether you were worthy of her," answered he. "I am speaking generally," he added.

"And by the word, you mean any one."

"It is not paying the maiden a handsome compliment to suppose she could form an attachment for any one who was unworthy of her," suggested the Earl of Derby.

"I did not make my remark individually," said Wat, in reply; "but it is no disparagement to any maiden to say that she might form an atachment for one whose personal appearance was well favoured, but who, upon a closer acquaintance, might be found deficient in all the mental qualities that make men worthy; because amiable, innocent, and good in her own person, she would measure the heart and inclinings of him she loved by her own, as an honest merchant would take a bad coin by its look, nor

think of testing it because he had not himself been guilty of issuing any such. In such a case it would be proper that the maiden should be persuaded out of the attachment, because the object is unworthy; were, however, the supposition of my good friend, John Chandos, to be practically illustrated by the fair Rubacelle forming an attachment for him, I should think she did perfectly right in resisting all persuasion to discard him from her heart, as I esteem him one in every way worthy of maiden or friend."

"I am much flattered by your opinion of me," said John Chandos, delightedly; and turning to Rubacelle, said rather appealingly, "He speaks like an oracle, does he not?"

Rubacelle, however, only smiled, and bent her head in reply; and addressing Wat, said to him, in a voice which was rather trembling—

"And *you* think, if a maiden was to form an attachment for one whom she knew to be worthy, who was in every way deserving of her, of one better and more beautiful than her, she would do right in loving him in defiance of all that might be urged in opposition."

"Most undoubtedly," replied Wat, who thought of Violet as he made the reply; "our love is raised, independent of the will, or many unhappy unions would be prevented. It is true, that where the object is unworthy, although the love may not be banished, it may not be indulged in; but where there exists no impediment in the shape of a want of worth, I deem it unjust and cruel to part, or attempt to part, from any worldly motive, two who have singled each other out from the mass, whose happiness lies centred in each other, and who, apart, after having met and loved, would pass an existence of misery and sadness. The passion of love is implanted in us by our Maker; is engrafted in our nature, shines out forcibly in our aspirations to Him, in our actions to our fellow-beings, and in our treatment of the gentler and weaker sex. It is a law of nature to love, but not to love according to rule; if it were, the feeling would be worth nothing. If we are to love those only whom it is politic to affect, why was love rendered independent of our will? There is no base consideration in true love; it seeks simply, but earnestly, the happiness of the object that has created it; it is above all sordidness, and is only selfish in a certain degree, never basely so; it would upraise the being loved higher than the highest in the land, would make it the worshipped of all worshippers, the cynosure of all eyes, the proudest, the dearest, the worthiest, and best beloved; would make the world a paradise for it, and Heaven an Elysium beyond all imagination; would guard it from all evil, all danger, distress, or oppression; would seek out, with a perseverance which the direst obstacles could not obstruct, means to increase the happiness, to invest it with peace and calm, but more delightful enjoyment; to make the days as hours, the weeks as days, and life itself a term of unalloyed felicity. This is the aim and object of true love; if two beings possess it for each other, and their mutual worthiness is all agreeing, why should a third person step in to prevent it?—one who can only be a gainer in a worldly point of view, perhaps not even in that. Such are my opinions on the subject; and having once formed a strong attachment for one who was every way worthy, no power on earth should persuade me from my love."

"You argue the case strongly and warmly," said the Earl of Derby.

"And, to my thinking, correctly," said Sir Walter Manny.

"And to mine," cried John Chandos; "though I confess I never thought much about it until lately. I had a friend, though, who was made a knight just as I was made a squire, some four or five years since, and what you urge about the strength of true love was wonderfully carried out by him. You must know that, not being of a very rich, though of noble family, he was sent into the family of a Norman noble as a page, preparatory to his becoming a squire. Well, he was a handsome boy, reckless dare-devil, something like myself—"

"Beauty and all?" asked the Earl.

"Oh, I don't say anything about that; but he was full of his tricks, and seemed as if nothing would make any impression upon his thoughtless nature. He spent, of course, most of his time with the ladies; but such time as he could spare was passed in field-sports. He was a rare fellow, I can assure you; could flute and make verses, and sing them, too, when they were made, with a rare voice. He was generous and free-hearted, scorned any mean act, and knew no more of fear than Sir Walter here. I told you he was handsome; he had an oval face, with regular, but decided features; very full eyes; and his hair was surpassingly rich in colour, and superb in the way it fell down upon his shoulders; the colour of his skin was just brown enough to be manly, but clear and soft, nevertheless, and—"

"Why, John Chandos! one would think, to hear your description, that you had been the ladye-love, instead of the maiden of whom you are about to tell us," exclaimed the Earl of Derby, laughing.

"Why, the truth is, he was a cousin of mine," returned John Chandos; "we were brought up children together. I was very much with him after he was created a squire, and I loved him like a brother; that is the reason I speak so highly of him, and how I came to know what you will speedily hear. In the family where he was page, there were three daughters, two considerably older than the third, the latter being but eight years old when my cousin first went there; he was ten at the same time. Well, he remained there until he was between fourteen and fifteen, nearer fifteen, and then he was duly made squire; then commenced his hawking matches, his riding at the quintain, at the pel, and at the Saracenic infidel, the training of his horses, and all other things which squires are taught; and being of apt abilities, made wondrous progress in them, to the chagrin, it appears, of two sons of the noble he was with—for let the sport be what it might, he excelled them in it invariably; and as they did not possess the generous spirit with which all men should view others who possess capabilities superior to their own, they regarded him with eyes of distate. He, however, did not observe it, for he believed them to have the same frank nature as his own, and to regard his successes with as much satisfaction as he did himself. Well, matters went on, without any change, as heretofore; he was the same light-hearted, laughing, good-hearted, noble fellow, and won upon every heart but those choked up with envy. At length, soon after Philip of Valois was crowned King of France, he went immediately and made war upon the Flemings. Well, as the noble to whom my cousin was squire went to the field, as a matter of course my cousin accompanied him, and the two sons also. The day previous to his departure, however, he was strolling as gay as ever through the garden of the castle, when he encountered the youngest daughter, La belle Genifrede: he accosted her, and together they promenaded among the flowers. Suddenly, he told me, it struck him that he should like less to part with her than any of the family; indeed, upon reflection, he did not

like parting with her at all—he had always looked upon her as a sister, and she being nearly of his own age, had been more suited to companion with than the elder sisters, whom he had waited upon as a page. And now it came suddenly upon him, that he really liked La belle Genifrede better than he could have believed, and to his own surprise he found that he was at a loss how to tell her so; not that it was much to tell one he had been always with for so many years. He laughed at himself for what he deemed his absurdity, and resolved to tell her how well disposed his heart was to her; and after a great struggle, and a throbbing of the heart, for which he could not account, he told her that he was about to bid her farewell for some time, perhaps for ever, but he hoped not the latter; and then he screwed up his courage, and told her he had not until then any idea how much fonder he was of her than he supposed himself to be; and in looking for a simile whereby she might judge the extent of his liking, he discovered there was nothing he loved half so well, and he laughed as he told her so; for it really surprised him that it had never struck him before. Instead, however, of her laughing too, she was silent for a little while; and when he went to look in her face to see why she did not answer him, he found that she was crying. The sight of tears in her gentle eyes went to his heart, as if an arrow had been shot through it; and on the impulse of the moment, he went down upon his knees and begged her pardon for having offended her, and told her he would have whipped out his tongue with his anelas, if he had thought for a moment such an acknowledgment as he had made would have given her pain. She did not let him labour long under his error, for she raised him up instantly, and, throwing herself into his arms, told him she loved him with all her heart. I don't know that she said those exact words, but she meant them, and that is all the same. Well, then they plighted troth and exchanged vows, and then she brought forth from beneath her cotehardie, where she had secreted it, a scarf which she had worked herself expressly for him, but which she had cried over so much as she embroidered it, that she was ashamed to offer it to him. I suppose, being blinded with tears, she was not able to see where to take the stitches; is it not so?" he suddenly asked of Katrine.

"I should suppose as much," she answered, smiling at the conclusion he had jumped at.

"Well, as all true men would, he vowed he would suffer death, or worse, rather than lose the scarf, or suffer it in any way to be disgraced, and so after parting, and feeling stronger than ever before he had felt, he went to the field along with the baron and her two brothers. They fought at Cassel, and in that desperate fight my cousin Alaric so well behaved that he attracted the special notice of Philip of France, and received, as well as a rich present, a badge of distinction, and on several occasions after, met with acknowledgments of his valour and marks of favour from the King. He returned in due time, unscathed from the wars, and once more took up his abode in the castle of Arques."

"Arques!" echoed Sir Walter and the Earl together.

"Confound my slippery tongue," cried John Chandos, "I did not mean to have mentioned names; however, it is no matter now it is done, but you will oblige me, if my tale is related again by any of you, that you will not let your tongues serve you the slippery trick which mine has done me, but suppress the names."

The promise was given, and he proceeded; but be it understood, that he was talking at Rubacelle during the whole of the narrative, and without any intention, certainly, of distressing her, was gazing most fixedly upon her.

"As soon as Alaric was at the castle, the love passage between himself and La belle Genifrede was proceeded with; she complimented and praised him upon his success, and he vowed that it was all owing to his love for her, and the scarf she had given, and which he vowed was magic-wove, for it had protected him from all harm, and had incited him on to deeds greater than he could accomplish—Do you make scarfs?" he suddenly asked of Rubacelle, stopping short in his narrative.

"Yes," she replied, "I can work and embroider them."

"What made you ask that question," asked Sir Walter, with a surprised laugh.

"Oh, because I thought the maiden would condescend to embroider one for me," he replied. "I should like to try the effect, I think it must be as good as a troop of horse at your back; is it not, Sir Walter? I see you have one, and you can tell me, having been in the field often enough to try it."

He pointed to the blue scarf which Violet had given him, and which had graced his surcoat when he commenced the attack upon Cadsant. A flush passed over the brow of Sir Walter, but he chased it away by a smile, and said, with a half glance at Wat, whose eyes he felt were upon him—

"This scarf has seen but one fight, but its influence in that one was shown me as plainly as if it had been the result of a hundred. It may not be really so useful as if one had a troop of horse at one's back at an important moment, but it instils as much confidence in you as if you had—and incites you, for the giver's sake, to die or retire from the field covered with glory."

"Will you embroider me a scarf, fair Rubacelle?" asked John Chandos, eagerly, without waiting to acknowledge Sir Walter's reply, being too much moved by his words. "If you will, and present me with it, I will do my best that it shall be borne victoriously through deeds which shall make brave men applaud, and cowards look on with wonder."

"Leave this question to be settled when you have finished your tale," observed the Earl of Derby; "I am anxious to hear more of what took place at the castle of Arques."

John Chandos bowed, but looked little pleased at the interruption. He went on with his story a little tardily at first, but soon warmed into it, and told it with the same fervency as before.

"Well, after he had been at the castle some little time, and persuaded her into the belief that it was love for her and the scarf together which had made him so successful, he arrived at the age of twenty, and was immediately knighted. La belle Genifrede worked him a banner, and then he made known to all that she was his ladye-love and his bride elect; and whoever did not deem her and treat her as the peerless ladye of the world, must look to his arms and his prowess to support his gainsay. Now, it seems that her parents had different views from hers, hoping to wed her to one of the sons of the Count of Hainault, and they bade him withdraw his proclaim, and took means to keep her from his sight.

"At first he was thunder-stricken at the words of the father—words which were seconded by his two sons, who were glad to throw off all appearance of friendship for him whose courage and address they both hated and feared; and he was, moreover, politely requested to quit the castle and forget there was ever such a place. At the same time they told him that it

was their intention to make it known as widely as he had done, that he had spoken unadvisedly, and that having flown at too high game, he had lost his hawk. Alaric, recovering somewhat from his surpise, made the three tremble like beaten hounds. He told them he would have her to wife in spite of them; that if her father was Jupiter, her brothers the keepers of the infernal regions, and her mother the seven-headed Dragon of Babylon, that the priests tell us of, they should not prevent him from having her, and bade them beware of crossing him; for so sure as he was an Englishman of the true Saxon breed, they should repent it bitterly. With that threat he bade them good day, and after striving in vain to get sight of La belle Genifrede, he mounted his steed and came away. He had to pass through the forest of Arques, which is about three or four leagues in length, and when about half-way through he was overtaken by four retainers, whom the Duke sent after him. They attacked him fiercely, but what would four rascally knaves be to a true knight, who had been well taught his profession of arms, and had seen active service in the field? He maintained his ground stoutly against them, although set upon thus unfairly, and reduced the rascals to two before they knew that he was defending himself.

"Now it is an established fact, that one knight is equal to two retainers, or villains of any description, therefore he had little difficulty in slaying one, and so miserably wounding the other that he had not an hour to live when he roared for mercy. Alaric drew from him who had set them upon him; and then he took the poor wretch's shrift, by which, strange to say, he ascertained what had become of La belle Genifrede, and the means to get access to her, if he could but get inside of the castle. He was overjoyed at this, and in consideration of it, remained with the wounded wretch until he expired, and then buried him. When he had accomplished this, he made for Dieppe, crossed over to England, and came direct to my father, who was his maternal uncle, and so interested him in his favour, that he promised him if he brought La belle Genifrede with him, by her own consent, he would grant her an asylum. He thanked him most heartily, and guaranteed that her willing consent should be obtained before she came. He begged a few vassals, and as I had the picking of them out, I chose the stoutest hearts of them all, and leaving a message for my father, I accompanied them. We made for Southampton, crossed over to Havre, and there procured the habiliments of French troops, which Alaric had the influence to manage, and then we started for Arques.

"We reached it after passing through the forest, and as the moon was rising broad and brightly in the heavens, we ascended the bold hill upon which the castle stands, and led on by my cousin, who was encased in complete mail—as indeed we all were—we summoned the warder of the castle, who answered us rather tardily; but on mentioning the name of King Philip, the portcullis was raised, and we were granted admittance. The Duke sent a special servant to acquaint my cousin that he would receive him—an invitation he turned over to me, addressing me as chief, and compelling me to enter the presence, while he commenced attempting to gain an audience with La belle Genifrede, by putting in practice the means he had obtained from the dying vassal in the forest of Arques. My part was soon accomplished; I gave a name to the Duke of a young French noble I knew to be in London, and stated myself to be on private service for the King of France, which he would excuse me from even hinting at, which he was obsequiously pleased to say he would. He introduced his brace of offsprings—the brothers of whom Alaric had spoken to me so bitterly; they looked such native-born fools, I could have found it in my heart to have beaten them; they bowed and grimaced, and smirked so mincingly, that I prayed heaven grant me patience to deliver me from the room, or I should forget myself and smite them. To, however, have a rub at them, I inquired for Alaric; I spoke most glowingly of him, and framed a set of remarks, which I affirmed to have been made by Philip of France.

"God assoilzie my soul for the lie! but it was done merely to spite them, and I said enough I believe to put them in a fever. They retaliated, however, by telling me such a bundle of unmitigated falsehoods concerning him, they made my hair stand an end; styled him cunning, ungrateful, rude, and no true knight. My blood rose up, and I threw down my glove, defying them to the proof; but they would not raise it, protesting the whole matter was unworthy quarrel, and that I should probably have an opportunity one day of judging for myself, and changed their converse to the daughter, who had been the occasion of the quarrel—La belle Genifrede. As much as they had spoken disparagingly of Alaric, so much did they speak praisingly of her, extolled her beauty, her manners, her temper, and her mind, which, as I knew they were telling truth, I listened to with more patience and complaisance than I suspect I had previously shown; indeed, so pleased were they with my attention, that they were about, even at that hour, to send for her, had I not, fearing such an act would interfere with Alaric's movements, hastily declined, and pleaded fatigue as an excuse for retiring, which was accepted, and every attention shown me, which I dispensed with as speedily as I could, in case of some little unfortunate accident, through their cursed obsequionsness, should discover the truth of the whole affair. However, everything went on as well as we could expect, and I retired to the room appropriated to me, in which I waited with much anxiety for Alaric, in expectation of the result of his efforts. After a lapse, which appeared an amazing length of time, he came and told me that he had seen her, and that she would be ready in an hour to depart; he had found her undergoing the most rigorous treatment, and in a frame of mind so low and despondent that she could scarce bear the sudden joy of meeting him; he had, however, with the aid of her tiring woman, who was a faithful girl, devoted to her, succeeded in calming her so as to listen and understand that he had come to bear her away—"

"Did she require much persuasion to quit her home?" asked Rubacelle, thoughtfully, yet with an air as if she was interested in the answer.

"Not any; she was ready to go all over the world with him—was ready to sacrifice home, family, friends—every tie that bound her to Arques, her love for him was so entire," replied John Chandos, with enthusiasm; "and her devotion was not lost upon him. I should like to know the deed he would not have dared to save her the slightest pain! Well, having agreed to fly, the matter was how to get out of the castle—time was everything to us. We were well assured that the moment La belle Genifrede was missed we should be suspected, and a hot pursuit made after us. We had only to depend on the fleetness of our steeds, and the ground we might gain in the first start, to prevent her being recaptured, and much blood shed, for there were none in the troop who would have surrendered or given an inch ground, let the consequences have been ever so severe.

"At length we hit upon the device of dropping a man

from a low loop-hole, in a wing to which Alaric could take him, knowing the place well, on to the banks of the fosse, which he was to swim across, steal along the banks on the other side, and winding through the trees which grew near the edge, suddenly make his appearance in front of the castle, and inquire for me by the name I had assumed, stating that he bore dispatches of importance, and if any questions were asked relative to his being on foot, he was to state that his horse had dropped dead in the wood from being over-ridden. I was then to profess a sudden necessity for departure, and without taking a farewell of my Lord Duke, quit the castle, having taken especial care that La belle Genifrede was in the centre of the troop. I picked out a fellow we had with us, who was a sharp smart fellow, quick and shrewd, and as brave as a lion. As soon as the matter was broached, he readily undertook to accomplish it. Alaric took him to the loop-hole, he squeezed through it, dropped into the fosse, and then my cousin returned to me. We waited in the greatest anxiety to hear him summon the warder, and to our impatient calculation, the time passed by considerably which ought to have brought him. We began to think he had been lost in the fosse, and had been seen and shot from the ramparts—a thousand things, everything but the right, for he succeeded in his stratagem to a miracle.

"When we had quite given him up, we heard his summons to the warder, heard the rattling chains of the portcullis as it was lowered, and in a short time afterwards the senaschal ushered in my fellow, who, with a face of mystery admirably put on, pretended to possess important intelligence, and looked at the seneschal with an air not to be mistaken. I therefore dismissed him on the pretence of hearing the news privately, and in a few minutes more summoned him to see that my men were ready for instant departure, King Philip having commanded my immediate presence: and I added, that it would give me pleasure to inform him of the superior manner in which things were managed at Arques, as well as a full account of my courteous reception and entertainment. It was really laughable to see the celerity with which we were, unconsciously it is true, furnished by them with facilities for escape. Fresh horses, where our own appeared at all jaded, provisions for a morning's repast, and everything done which we could have looked for had we been of their own household. The troop was purposely kept straggling about the court-yard; but as soon as La belle Genifrede and her attendant, both well disguised with bascinet and accoutrements, were upon their steeds, the order was given to depart, the troopers fell in in close order, and we passed through the court-yard. The portcullis was lowered, the sentinels stood under arms as we galloped over the drawbridge; we gained the hill, cantered down it, and entered the forest of Arques; then we scoured along at our smartest pace for Dieppe. The distance was eleven leagues, but once only we stopped on the journey, and then a short time only, and before the sun had reached the meridian we were at Dieppe.

"It seemed as though fortune befriended us, for an English ship was just about weighing anchor to cross over to the coast of Sussex. We went on board; the anchor was raised, and the sails set, the wind blew sharply, but very fair, and when we were about a league from the shore, which you may believe we watched anxiously, we perceived a large troop of horsemen suddenly come galloping down: they were soon made acquainted that they were too late, but sought to obviate it by hiring a swift-sailing vessel, loading her with men, and giving us chase.

"It is about twelve to sixteen hours' sail across with a very fair wind; and as their vessel was a much better sailer than ours, the captain comforted us by saying they would overtake us before we were halfway across: still he would see what was to be done. Every sail they had was put into requisition; the wind freshened, and we seemed flying through the water; but what was good for us was good for them also, and the increased wind quickened their progress in as great a degree as ours. They were evidently gaining upon us, which would have signified nothing if we had not the ladies with us; for although their numbers exceeded ours, there would have been no hesitation to have had a rub with them. At last I observed they suddenly took down nearly all their sails, and mentioned it instantly to the captain, who, without answering me, roared to his sailors to be ready, at a moment's warning, to take in everything. He then pointed out to me a long curling line of white upon the sea, and above it a black, dense mass of cloud. It was a hurricane sweeping along at a fearful rate; I saw it overtake the vessel in pursuit—she seemed suddenly enveloped in mist, and I lost sight of her; then, in another moment, I saw her pitching and tossing about furiously. I looked at the captain; he was watching the coming tempest with straining eyes and ears, which, with an intensity of attention, seemed listening to the hollow murmur of the wind.

"The sailors, who appeared to be as well aware as he of what was about to happen, stood ready, the moment his voice was heard, to gather in every sail. We were already dashing through the water at a tremendous rate; it seemed as though its velocity could not be increased without ending in the destruction of the vessel. The scene was new to me, and I looked upon everything with an interest which would not give way to any sense of danger. I turned my eyes in search of the vessel, already beating about in the hurricane, and was unable to see her; all was one fearful dark mass where she had been, save the white masses of foam as the sea tossed and dashed beneath the influence of the wind. I was, while lost in conjecture as to what had become of her, suddenly startled by the horse voice of the captain roaring, with stentorian strength, to take in everything—an order which was obeyed with surprising swiftness, and our vessel, with her naked masts, lay bare for the wind to exhaust its fury upon it. It had not yet, however, reached us; and the captain, taking the rudder in his own hands, though aided by a man, saw that everything which could be done to meet the effects of the gale was done, and then suddenly he uttered a loud cry of warning, and the next instant our masts were bending like willow wands beneath the most furious blast of wind I ever heard, and the vessel was bowed as though she would be engulphed in the huge waves that now encircled us; but she rose again and o'ertopped them, to be again nearly buried beneath the lashing foam. The captain, however, was master of his craft, and after a night of great danger, and doubt whether we should not be wrecked, he steered us into the little harbour of Shoreham, and when daylight came, we landed all safely. La belle Genifrede was nearly dead with fright and sickness, and Alaric had made himself ill in his anxiety for the maiden; but a few hours' rest did them much benefit, and in good time we arrived at my father's castle, and there they were married with great rejoicings."

"And what became of the vessel which was in pursuit of you?" inquired the Earl of Derby.

"It was wrecked off Hastings, and nearly all on board perished," he replied.

"Were either of the Duke's sons on board?" inquired Sir Walter Manny.

"No," he returned; "they joined in the pursuit as far as the sea shore, but no further; they offered very large rewards for the capture of La belle Genifrede, but did not see the policy of risking their lives as well as disbursing a round sum."

"And what further steps took they respecting La belle Genifrede?" asked Rubacelle.

The hopeful trio blustered and vowed, God knows what! But, although Alaric challenged all three to combat in fair field, they declined the honor, pleading that they would not give him the satisfaction, but thus show their contempt of him—when, in reality, they durst not, for they knew, an' they had, their lives were forfeited. My father, however, settled the matter. He appealed to Edward, and through him to Philip of France, and moved by his mediation, the Duke received his daughter to his arms, and endowed her with large possessions and gifts, and would be glad to know the villain who should dare say one word to disparage her gallant husband. The brothers, too, are with him; as before, picking up all the scraps of applause and praise that run off him. He lives at Arques with his wife most happily; and thus you see the power of love over him. He knew nothing about it until a sudden thought crossed him, and then he found himself over head and ears, ready to do deeds and feats of arms, which should make his name resound with martial honors far and near; and thus I hold it, that your true love—that which Wat Tyler has described—comes upon you all at once. You have no previous thought about the matter, but some little accident shows you at a moment the maiden who is to be the ladye of your heart; and you say to yourself, this is her! You are a little surprised yourself at first, but afterwards you go on all regular enough, loving away like mad, and ready to hold her peerless against all comers, or do any feats becoming a brave man for love of her. I should have told you, that Alaric did a host of things, which he would never have thought of doing, that made his name great in the mouths of the bravest knights of France, bearing her favour as his lode-star; and this I take it as a good illustration that a third person has no right to step in and interfere between two who love each other right well and truly. The Duke did, you see, and what was the result? He nearly lost his daughter for ever—caused the death of a number of brave fellows—and gave his consent at last; which last, however, he could not exactly help, or he would have withheld it to all eternity."

"And there ends your tale?" asked the Earl.

"It does," he replied.

"Were you ever in love, John Chandos?" asked Sir Walter Manny, looking steadfastly at him, with a smile lurking round the corners of his mouth.

John Chandos' steed instantly commenced prancing, caracoling, and curveting as if he had been gored with the sharp rowel of a spur, and John Chandos was some little time ere he could get him quiet. When he did, his face was the color of scarlet, in all probability, the effects of his exertion in reining in his steed—natheless it might have been at the question. He, however, made no reply. Sir Walter, determined not to be defeated, the moment he perceived his embarrassment, repeated his question so clearly, that the squire had no opportunity of evading it; so, putting a bold face on the matter, he turned his eyes on Rubacelle with a fervent gaze, which no one could misunderstand, although he was not aware it was so generally observed, and said, emphatically—

"Yes!" and then added, addressing Sir Walter Manny, "were you?"

It was now Sir Walter's turn for his steed to prance and curvet, but a moment's reflection taught him it would not do for him to appear disconcerted, even on such a matter; and he therefore quietly replied—

"All men are in love some period or other, I doubt not. I have not passed unscathed, and, if so, will maintain the brightness and purity of my ladye-love against all the world, as a brave knight should."

As the conversation was trenching upon delicate ground—giving birth to remembrances which, if not painful, were, at least, grave, and, to a certain extent tinctured with sadness, Sir Walter Manny, with a tact which he possessed in an eminent degree, changed it to subjects light and agreeable, and they continued thus until they reached Ghent. Here they were received by Jacob von Arteveld, the brewer of Ghent—a man who was the Rienzi of Holland—of whom Froissart says, that he "had gained so much popular favor and power over the Flemings, that everything was done according to his will. He commanded in all Flanders, from one end to the other, with such authority, that no one dared to contradict his orders."

He met them with every token of respect and courtesy—gave orders that the troops should be well quartered and attended to, with their horses in every particular—set apart apartments in his mansion, which might be termed a palace, for the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter Manny—and conducted Rubacelle and Katrine to his wife, from whom they obtained the kindest and most delicate attention. When these matters were arranged, and Jacob Von Arteveld was made acquainted with the affair at Cadsant, he expressed no displeasure at the event; on the contrary, sent over ambassadors immediately to King Edward, "recommending himself to his grace, with his whole heart and faith." He signified also, that if he crossed over to Antwerp, he would gain the heart of the Flemings, who were not sorry for the discomfiture of Cadsant, the Earl of Flanders having placed the garrison there without their consent or advice, and whatever designs he might have upon France, would be greatly benefited thereby, as he had wrote to them himself to obtain assistance and co-operation from all Flanders.

The Earl of Derby, Sir Walter Manny, Wat Tyler, Michael, John Chandos, and the troops, therefore remained in Ghent until Edward's answer arrived.

CHAPTER VI.

"Fear nothing thou—myself to-night,
And each o'erlooking star that dwells
Near God will be thy sentinels." T. MOORE.

"The inferior demons of the place
Rais'd rueful shrieks and hideous yells around."
THOMSON.

"As is the lion in the hunter's toils, thou art caged in. Thy doom is settled; aye, as sealed as if the genius of your star had writ it." DUGALD MOORE.

"You wear a sword, sir—so do I!"
"Well, sir."
"You know the use, sir, of a sword?"
"I do—to whip a knave, sir!" S. KNOWLES.

WHEN Violet recovered from her swoon, she found herself supported in the arms of the stranger, who had entered by the window. It was some little time before she became fully sensible of the horror of her situation; but when the effects of the faint had passed off, and she was enabled to understand the position in which she was placed alone, in the dead hour of the night, in the power of one who was an utter stranger, whose purpose, from the mode in which he had presented himself, seemed to augur evil—out of the pale of all help; her brain grew dizzy with fright with imagining ill of the most terrible nature, from which there were no means, no chance, of extricating herself; she looked wildly round to see herself immured in a small chamber, whose stone walls seemed to defy all hope of screams, the most piercing, being heard without; she was held in the strong grasp of one from whom she tried to fly. The effort she felt would be in vain, for the heavy door of the apartment was closed, and if she attempted to open it, she knew she could be utterly prevented succeeding by the strength of him who now held in his arms as though she were a weak child: her case seemed desperate, she had supplicated heaven in this last strait, unweariedly; but her prayers, in the moment of her despair, she believed had been unheeded, unresponded to, and she must perish. She felt so utterly desolate, so abandoned by her friends, by any who could or would afford her any assistance in her danger, that, broken-spirited, hopeless, helpless, she lost all energy, all self-controul, and giving way to the deeply agonizing sense of her forlorn condition, she removed herself from his support, sunk almost abjectly upon her knees, burst into a flood of tears, which were little less than the offspring of a broken heart, and in tones, replete with the extremest misery and anguish, exclaimed—

"Spare me!"

"Don't cry so," replied the stranger; "I can't bear to see a woman cry; it goes to my heart as if a skean was being thrust there; look up and dry your eyes; it's no use your crying, that won't help you, you know, a bit; come, come, be a little firmer. Mary Magdalene! you'll bring tears into my eyes if you weep in this dreadful way," continued he, as Violet sobbed almost hysterically. He paused a moment, and it seemed as if he spoke the truth, for he brushed his hand hastily across his eyes and did not speak for a minute, then he made an audible gulp, and ejaculated—

"Poor thing, poor thing, she's quite down, and enough to make her too. Well, well, we must see what's to be done. I'm no chicken, and it'll take a large bird to crow over me. There, there—wipe your eyes, you little trembling fledgling, all will go well yet."

His words were uttered in low, but such kind tones there was no mistaking their intention. And Violet, who in her hopelessness would catch at anything, as drowning men catch at straws, making a strong effort to repress the violence of her emotion, murmured—

"You will not harm me?"

"Harm you!" exclaimed the man, "no, I came here to help you, and I will, as sure as my name is Edric; so cheer up, and wipe the water out of your pretty eyes, and comfort yourself a bit, and then I'll tell you what I mean to do."

"I am composed," cried Violet, eagerly; oh, tell me, pray tell me, that you will remove me, and my dear friend Flora, from this dreadful place; that you will restore us to those from whom we were torn; tell me this, and I will bless you with my latest breath."

"I'll try it, maiden, if I get thrust from this old turret neck and crop for thwarting my master; which, when he comes to know the part I have taken in the affair, I have no doubt he will do, without wasting any unnecessary time in explaining his intentions to me," replied Edric; "I don't, however, see what could have induced him, in the first place, to carry you off, and in the next, to bring you here; for the first is unlike his nature; he always having, until this instance, been scrupulous in all his tricks and wild London gallantries, about his honour, and, in the second case, the accommodations and the wildness of this place is as unsuited to his habits and tastes, as his life in London would be to me, who have been born and bred a woodman, and hope to die following the craft."

"I believe him to be instigated to the cruel deed by his friend and companion, Martin du Bois," said Violet, giving instinctively a strong shudder as she mentioned his name. "I feel sure, that had he not have conceived it, this violence would never have been done."

"Very likely," replied Edric, "I don't like his looks—I hate your pale-faced, hang-dog, low-browed looking varlets; give me a clear, open, frank face, that says what it means, and shows at the same time that it will stick to it in spite of the devil himself. My wife told me your story, and told me that my master had promised, after he carried you off, to take you back again unarmed."

"He did," said Violet, "and I believe it is entirely owing to the representations of the evil-minded man who accompanies him, that he has not kept his word."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised." responded Edric; "I'll keep a sharp eye upon him, and if he eludes me, I will believe he can walk up to a buck and catch him by the horns any fine morning he pleases."

"You are the husband of the kind creature who attended us this evening?" asked Violet.

"I am," he answered, "and I can tell you you are right in calling her a good creature, for she is one. Nobody loved their mother more dearly than I did mine—heaven rest her soul!—but good woman as she was, my wife was no jot worse. She has taken great interest in your situation, and said so much to me about it, that I feel as eager for your safety as she does—or mayhap for that matter as you do yourself—and here I am to aid you."

"How shall I thank you?" exclaimed Violet, gratefully.

"Oh, don't say anything about that until you are safe away," he exclaimed; "there will be plenty of time for thanks when that is accomplished. I can

tell you it will be no easy matter to manage; however, maiden, place faith in me, it shall not be given up for want of trying."

"Lord bless the maiden!" exclaimed Edric; "go now? no, in all probability not for a week."

"A week!" ejaculated Violet, despondingly.

"Can we go now?" inquired Violet; quite ready to undergo fresh fatigue if necessary, to obtain so desirable an end as escaping.

"Aye," he replied, "perhaps longer. I am sorry to say it, but it won't do to endanger your chance of getting away safely for the sake of remaining here a

day or two. You expected, I suppose, I had come to take you away now; no, no, I only came to tell you that you might keep up your spirits, for you had a friend near you who would see you safely through all your danger until you were quit of it—that's all at present. You must not be impatient while we are about the matter, it will be as well to take such measures as to manage it truly, and you may lay down and sleep lightly with the conviction that no harm shall come to you while beneath this roof, for I will not close my eyes or abate my vigilance till you are quite out of the clutches of any one here who can or will harm you."

"I am deeply grateful for your kindness," said Violet, "and will do my utmost to repay your good services the moment it lies in my power."

"Spare your thanks until I have earned them," repeated Edric; wait until I have done you the service, then we'll talk about thanks. It is one thing to proffer fairly, and another thing quite to act up to the promise: when I have done so I shall be ready to accept your thanks."

"As you will," returned Violet, "still I thank you;" but tell me, why is there a necessity to remain here so long ere we attempt to escape?"

"Because I have three sharp fellows to outwit," said Edric. "First, my master, of who's cunning I know little, it's true, but of whom I've been told that he is not slow in discovering anything. Second, this friend of his, whom I am sure is a knave—and most knaves are quick witted. And, lastly, the Norman, Gualtier, the most cunning knave I ever met with; he wants but half an eye to see what few men can find out with a pair. He is suspicious and distrustful by nature, and once rouse his suspicions, he will not rest until he has discovered the whole matter, whatever it may be, or however ingeniously contrived and disguised. It was for that reason I chose to come in at the window, by the aid of the tree close by it, instead of coming up the stairs. If he had caught sight of me he would have followed me, listened to all I had to say, and overthrown all my plans without even appearing to be conscious of aught. It is fortunate, by the way, that these stone walls are of immense thickness, or the scream you saluted me with when you first clapped your eyes on me, would have upset my scheme, and brought all three upon me. All you have to do is to wait patiently for the time; I will work silently, but surely. Take no notice whatever of me, and very little of my wife; she will act her part to admiration. When women are bent upon carrying any favourite project, the foul fiend himself would be outwitted if he tried to prevent them. You have a good friend in her, and if she does not so manage as to get you away from here without let or hindrance, I shall be amazed. Be surprised at nothing you see or hear respecting me or Nanette; we may find it necessary to act in such a way as to lead you to doubt the truth of our intentions to serve you; but entertain no such thought, for I again repeat, while here, an' I have strength or means to prevent it, you shall meet with no harm. I shall now leave you, and you may retire to your couch without fear, and sleep away the effects of your fright and journey. Hold yourself ready to depart at a moment's notice, although a week may elapse before the moment arrives. My wife will let you know when it does come; she will lead you out of this building, and I will guide you the rest of the way until you reach London, or wherever else you may wish to go. Farewell for the present. Although I am rough and rude in my appearance, maiden, I have a true heart in my body, and you *shall see* that its dictates—those which should come from a true heart—are followed in your behalf. Now go to sleep, and don't spoil your pretty eyes with crying any more as you did just now; and don't believe that, because seeing you so disprited brought water into my eyes, that I have less courage, or a weaker nature than becomes a man. I have always found the man who can shed a tear for pity, can wield a good sword in defence of wrong; such is my case, as you shall find. Good night—God bless you; keep up your spirits, and be assured that you have two good friends in Nanette and Edric Heartfeldt."

He shook her hand with a pressure almost painful, and then he looked out of the window, and ascertaining that all was quiet and still beneath, he swung himself lightly out of the window, and Violet watched him descend by means which appeared frightfully insecure, and held her breath in alarm until she saw him alight on the ground, wave his hand, and instantly disappear among the trees which surrounded the building. She then breathed more freely, uttered a prayer of thankfulness for the cheering intelligence he had communicated to her, closed the window, and retired to her couch. The great fatigue of her long journey, coupled with the incessant excitement she had laboured under, had completely exhausted her; and her sweet fair face was scarcely laid upon the pillow ere she sunk into a profound slumber.

The morning broke brightly, and the sun was shining brilliantly into her chamber ere she awoke. When she opened her eyes she saw Flora seated by her side, gazing fondly upon her, having watched her, while she slept, with all the fondness and anxiety which a young mother would hang over her first child, whose delicateness make her fear that it would be taken from her. Violet's face was as pale as the white pillow upon which her head reclined, and her eyelids were wet with tears which had oozed from her eyes, while in her dream acting over again some of the distressful scenes which she had encountered. As Flora gazed upon her pallid features, her heart ached at the change which so short a time had made in her. Her cheeks, which had so beautifully borne the flush of health, were now bare even of a tinge of that sweet hue, and her lips were nearly as colourless as her cheeks. Flora, ever prone to give her imagination the rein, fancied that she traced the hand of death stealing gently upon her beloved friend. Her heart grew sick the moment the thought crossed her, and she would have given worlds that she had never conceived it. The more strongly she tried to shake off an idea so painful, the more powerfully it became impressed upon her, and with it followed a train of reflections that filled her heart with the most dismal forebodings. Independent of the agony of losing for ever one who was so very dear to her as Violet, there came the apprehension of her being left in this frightfully solitary building alone with those who had carried her off. She felt as if the very idea would be the death of her, and worked herself up into such a state by her miserable anticipations, that she had arrived, when Violet awoke, at both their deaths—for she felt satisfied she could not outlive Violet a day—and burial in one grave in that lonely wood—a place she felt afraid even to be buried in, and that nobody ever heard anything more of either of them.

As soon as she perceived Violet's eyes were open, she bent over her and kissed her fondly, and then kneeling down by her side, she took her hand, and leaning on the bed, looked her affectionately in the face, and said—

"Dear Violet, are you not very ill?"

"No, Flora," she replied; "I still feel the effects of our long travel, and though but just awakened

from what must have been a long sleep, I feel tired; my limbs ache, but beyond that I am not unwell."

"Are you sure?" asked Flora earnestly.

"I am," she returned. "Why do you ask so anxiously?"

"Because you look pale and very languid, and tears came from your eyelids while you slept," returned Flora, "and I feared that what we had gone through had so affected you that it would destroy you, and you know, Violet, that if you were to die, I should die too; your death would kill me. I should break my heart, for I have nobody in the whole world to love me, and bear with me, and be so very, very kind to me as you have. Dear, dear Violet, I cannot bear to think of it. I—I," sobs drowned her further utterance, and burying her face upon the bed-covering, she wept bitterly. Violet pressed her hand affectonately, and said kindly—

"Do not give way, dear Flora, to such thoughts, I am but fatigued; nothing more believe me; I shall soon be quite restored. You look pale and weary, but I will not indulge in any foreboding so distant as the prospect of losing you. Come, cheer thee; I have good news for thee—news which will speedily change thy tears to smiles.

A few more consolatory words, and Violet succeeded in banishing the sorrowful speculations in which Flora had with such painfulness to herself indulged; and then, in an under tone, for fear of being overheard, she related to her her interview with Edric, and the hopes which he held out of effecting their escape. Flora heard her with unmixed delight, and her sanguine mind was as instantly as fertile in imagining good, as it previously had evil. Violet could not help smiling to see how rapidly she hung one fortunate circumstance upon another, until she had accomplished their safe arrival in London at the hostel, "Ye Sonne."

"And then, you know, Violet, we shall be sure to see your foster-father, Halbert, and his grave-looking brother, and they will be delighted to see us—won't they? and then we shall all go to Gloucestershire, and, I dare say, we shall find your father and mother, and there'll be happiness for them to find *you* their daughter; and then we shall all come back to Brenchley—dear, dear little Brenchley—shan't we? Oh, yes, for we can tell them what a beautiful little place it is, and how much happier they would be there than any where else; which they would—wouldn't they? You smile, but you know they would; and when they found that you so much wished them, they couldn't have the heart to refuse you, and so we should all go back to Brenchley—and then, Violet—and then—ah, Violet—"

"Well," added Violet, observing her hesitate, "what then?"

"Why then, Violet, by that time Wat and—and Michael would be returned, and they would not go back to the wars again—would they? And then we should be so happy—so very happy—shouldn't we?"

It would have been a useless, as well as an unkind act, to have thrown any damp upon the ardour of her speculations, and therefore Violet, who knew well, if she did so, what a disappointment it would be, subscribed to them, so entirely to Flora's satisfaction, that in the warmth of her delight she threw her arms round her neck and kissed her most fervently.

Violet now rose and attired herself, and Nanette soon appeared to lead them to a small chamber, as a sitting apartment. It was but little larger than the one they had quitted, and had the same dismal view of the black, cheerless forest, as the other. She spread before them a repast, and asked them how they had rested, and if either of them had been disturbed during their sleep.

"Oh, yes," cried Flora, suddenly; "I forgot to tell you, Violet, I was horribly frightened in the middle of the night; the room in which I slept has no window like yours—nothing but a large round hole, through which the light comes in a long strip, and where the wall catches it, it makes one large round bright place. Well, something, I cannot tell you what, awoke me; the moon was shining in through the hole, and I happened to turn my eyes to the wall and there beheld a gigantic face—hideously ugly, grinning, nodding, and staring at me. Ugh! I popped my head under the clothes, and my heart beat as if it would break out of my side; I laid quite still and held my breath. There was not the least noise, and I suppose after that I dropped off asleep, for I remember nothing more, and when I got up this morning I had forgotten it, or I should have looked for the face."

"It was nothing more than the shadow of a tree which grows opposite to it, and as it waves about in the wind, gives that peculiar form upon the wall which you saw; it has been noticed many times, and at certain times appears very singular," said Nanette.

"I am glad I know what it was," said Flora, "or I would never have slept in the room again. Did you see anything, Violet," she inquired.

"I was but disturbed before I went to sleep, of which you are aware, Nanette, I presume," responded Violet.

"I am," she replied, placing her fingers to her lips, as if to counsel silence on the point, and added, "but you were not disturbed by aught during your sleep?"

"No," returned Violet; "after I had closed my eyes I did not wake until a short time before you came to fetch us hither. Why do you ask?"

"Because," she returned, "there are singular noises and strange lights which occur in this building that might have alarmed you, unless you were prepared for them. I would have made you acquainted with them last night, but you both looked so fagged and weary that I thought it the kindest course to suffer you to retire to rest without adding to your weariness, or further disturbing your minds, by filling them with expectations of what your fatigue might fortunately keep you ignorant of until you were enabled to be made acquainted with their nocturnal visits. Being so prepared, robs them of at least half their terror."

"Why, you don't mean to tell us there are ghosts in this dreary building?" exclaimed Flora, with an appearance of considerable alarm.

"I hardly know what to call them, maiden," returned Nanette, "to those who are unused to them, they are at least very terrifying, but they are harmless," she added—"and I have become so accustomed to them, that I have no fear at all. They are only to be seen at night, and then the moment a light appears they vanish."

"Is there any reason given for their appearance?" asked Violet.

"None that I am aware of," replied Nanette. "This building is known for miles round to be haunted, but nobody knows why or wherefore, except that it is said the Chevalier Leon's father was a wizard, and the creatures we see here are his spirits. It is certain that he was a strange man, very learned and very mysterious; had quantities of large books, filled with strange characters, from which he was always reading and studying, and trying strange things, which in their nature appeared unearthly and sinful; and, if not absolutely wicked, at least very presumptuous. He had a fire always burning, and a

crucible always upon it, trying to make something which should change any metals, however common, into gold. He called himself an—"

"An alchymist," suggested Violet, upon seeing her hesitate.

"Yes, alchymist, that is the word: but he used to try fearful things to bring it about. It is said the wood used sometimes, when he was at his strange labours, ring with shrieks and fiendish laughter, and a red glow would rise as if the wood was blazing for miles, and there are those who have gone so far as to affirm, some of the country people who have lost their way in the wood, have suddenly come upon this solitary dwelling, and seen sights which have so scared them, that few ever recovered their senses after having witnessed them, they have been so very horrible."

"Did they say what the sights were?" asked Flora, faintly, staring at Nanette, with an aspect which expressed such a fearful interest in what she was hearing, it would have made any one smile to have seen her.

"There were a few who recovered their senses sufficiently to relate," replied Nanette; "but, as far as could be gathered, they were supernatural shapes, the most horrible and fantastic that could be imagined, and these beings gambolled and played such antics, and, it is supposed, attacked the passers by in such a frightful manner, that if they did not lose their life they did their reason—in most cases past all recovery."

"But were these strange doings suffered to pass unnoticed?" asked Violet.

"No," said Nanette; "intelligence was sent to London, and a party of soldiers were sent down—"

"And they put all the spectres to flight!" cried Flora, exultingly.

"No," returned Nanette, quietly; "their bodies were found floating in the river Ex, a long distance from here. It is said that the officer who commanded them was the first discovered floating in the water, and a strip of parchment appended to him, saying, that all those who thus rudely attempted to penetrate the mysteries of this place would suffer a similar fate, and those who caused their intrusion should be visited, they and their race, with a doom which should involve a misery worse than death. I suppose that the first loss was considered the best, for there was no further attempt made to search into the secrets of the place, and that old man, Guthelred de la Agnelet, lived in it until he reached a very old age, and then he went away, none knew whither; the only time we heard of him since was, that he was dead, and that the young Chevalier had come into possession of all his wealth."

"Your story is a strange one," observed Violet; "how came you to reside here after hearing such dreadful stories of the place?"

"Ah," said Flora, "how could you have done this?"

"I was induced by that, which has made many do things requiring a far greater exercise of courage," replied Nanette, smiling; "I mean, love. When I was about fourteen—I am not twenty yet—I was a laughing, thoughtless, giddy girl, high-spirited, and caring as little for anything or any one as could well be supposed. I lived in a village some distance from this, and in visiting a hamlet where some relations of mine were residing, I had to cross part of this forest. I was frequently in the habit of doing this. At last, having heard so much about this queer old place, I determined to have a peep at it, in spite of all the terrors I had heard about it; and, accordingly, one fine morning, on pretence of visiting the hamlet, I found my way here, and had a good look at it, expecting every moment to see some hideous griffin, or other horrible shape make its appearance; and though the sight of one would have frightened me almost to death, I felt disappointed that one did not come, and, with this feeling, I grew a little bolder and stole round it, and while peering up at the melancholy-looking windows, wondering whether they would not presently show me something to remember for ever, I felt a cold hand laid upon my shoulder."

"I should have died on the spot," ejaculated Flora emphatically, most deeply interested in the story.

"I did not," said Nanette, "but I screamed, and instantly a hand was placed over my mouth. I was sure now I was being embraced by some sprite whose very sight would kill me; all I had heard about the place rushed into my mind at once. I wished most devoutly I had never been so fool-hardy; muttered all the prayers I could think of together; and expected that in another moment I should have fainted, if the spectre had not whispered in my ear that he would not hurt me, in such a gentle voice that I thought I would have a look at him before I did faint, and, accordingly, I turned my head by degrees a little and a little, until I caught a sight of him, and there I saw—"

"What?" asked Flora, eagerly.

"A youth about sixteen," replied Nanette, "with a handsome, frank-looking, open countenance, a large pair of rich clear hazel eyes, and a voice which seemed to have honesty in every tone of it. I confess, I was startled to find myself so agreeably deceived, and thought immediately that if he did me any hurt he would belie his looks very much. He asked what brought me to that lonely spot; I confessed my curiosity; and he laughed, because I asked if he was not one of the spirits belonging to it. He told me he dwelled there, but he was no spirit, nor were there any spirits there that any one with a good conscience need be alarmed at, and invited me to enter—but I declined. I had already dared more than I had given myself credit for, and was not courageous enough to proceed one jot farther. As I persisted in refusing, he led me a little way from the place, and bade me sit down beneath a tree and wait for him a few minutes, for if I would not enter the house, he must; but would return in a very short time. I did not like to consent, yet I did not like to refuse; and when again he asked me, and seemed to set so much value on my consent, by the urgency of his manner, I said yes, and he thanked me heartily. He ran away like a deer, and I sat down beneath the tree—it was a mournful spot—but the sun was shining, yet it was very lonely and seemed dreadfully silent; for there was no bird singing, and then I began to think that I had better go while I had an opportunity, for if he should be a wicked sprite after all, what would become of me? The more I thought about it, the more foolish it appeared to me to be sitting there—actually waiting for him—and then, on the impulse, I rose to go; but I remembered his face, his clear eyes, his rich voice, and his gentle manner, and I thought it would be so very uncouth to go without exchanging another word, and so I sat down again, recollecting immediately I did so that I had heard my confessor say, that Satan often assumed the fairest form to tempt us to wickedness and sin, and in all probability this was the case with him who had just left me; therefore, as I was but a young, weak girl, and quite alone in this solitary place, the most prudent thing I could do, under any circumstances, was to return home at once. I rose to depart. I felt reluctant, I knew not why. I only wished that if he was a sprite, that he had assumed some other form—I didn't care how frightful—it would have sent me flying home without any scruple

whatever. But now, although I had made up my mind that he was a devil, and one that I ought to shun as I would a plague, I could not find it in my heart to leave the spot without seeing him again. Besides, too, I thought if he was a sprite, what would be the use of my running away, he would overtake me without any trouble, and then would have no mercy upon me, while now, at least, he seemed kindly disposed towards me. I was still hesitating what to do, when he appeared, bearing refreshments, wine, fruits, and such things, and said that if I would not partake of his hospitality in the house I should out of it; and acted so kindly, and so unlike what I imagined a sprite would do, that I could not find it in my heart to say nay to his pressing offers to partake of what he had spread before me. Then he told me he was the son of Guthelred de la Agnelet's confidential servant; but he spent his time in wood-cutting, preferring the open air to the confinement of this dwelling. In a very short time I quite forgot all thought about his being a sprite, and laughed and chatted, and was very happy, and then when I told him I must go, he ran away with the vessels he had brought, and walked with me through the wood close to our village, begging me to come again, which I felt no disinclination to do. But I could not get the thoughts of this haunted dwelling out of my head, and I told him I was afraid, and that notwithstanding his good looks, he might be a devil after all. He laughed at my ideas, and said perhaps he was not of the sort I imagined, and, giving me a kiss, asked me if I smelt any brimstone, which I could not help confessing I did not; and after a little laughing he grew serious, and told me the real story of this place, the reason it was first built, and how it got the reputation of being haunted. Would you like to hear it?"

"I should, indeed," said Violet.

"Oh, yes!" cried Flora. "Pray tell us, if it will take off the horrible impression which you have as yet given me of this terrible place."

Nanette smiled and proceeded—

"When Guthelred, the father of Leon de la Agnelet, and a Norman, was a very young man, he was not very rich, nor of a family that could boast a title, and he had the audacity to fall in love with the daughter of some out-of-the-way, high-titled Norman noble, and she had such a want of sense of her own dignity and station as to return it: and as there was no hope of a consent to their union, if they asked it, they did not wait a refusal, but were wedded without it. They fled to England—were pursued and tracked to London—her father swearing by all the stars in heaven, that he would destroy them both. They fled to our village, being a remote spot, and one hardly known of in London. They had assumed various disguises, and had completely thrown her father and myrmidons off the scent, and then Guthelred built this place. When it was finished, he came to reside in it with his wife; here I believe they lived very happily for some time, and then she died—she was buried in the garden—and he became as a broken-hearted man. He quitted the place for a few years, and then returned again, but, as it is reported, with his nature quite changed. Before he left, he was quiet, and amiable, and affable; he was on his return morose, gloomy, harsh, and violent in his manner. He brought books and vessels of curious workmanship, and was very studious, and, as far as could be learned, dealt in magic and other fearful things, and at night he performed his mysterious arts, and there would be seen fires of different colours shine through the window of his room at the dead hour of night, and noises and groans, and shouts of demoniac laughter would be heard affrighting the two domestics who had taken the place of his former servant, whom he said had died abroad. Sometimes they would hear in the middle of the night such frightful shrieks, that they would crawl trembling from their beds, and be impelled by some resistless power—although sinking with fear—to seek the cause, and then would find him stretched, white as ashes, senseless upon the stairs, or, as it may be, upon the threshold of his room, which they never dared enter, independent of his orders to that effect. When they had revived him, he would stare wildly and fearfully round, and as soon as recollection came he would dismiss them, retire to his lonely room, and they never knew why this was; so, as they found they could live there no longer, they determined to quit, and one of them spoke privately to Edric's father, then a young man who feared nothing, to that effect, relating what I have now told you, and then stated their intention to Guthelred. He gave his consent, and they did quit, but were never more heard of.

"Then Edric's father came, and Guthelred once more departed, no one knows even now whither, and was away five years. In the mean time Edric's father got married, and his wife lived with him; there were no noises then, and they passed their time quietly and happily, until one stormy night when the wind howled fearfully, the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed vividly and brightly, and the rain poured in torrents, a loud knocking was heard at the door, and a voice was heard above the roar of the storm, calling upon Edric's father to open the door; he obeyed, and, to his astonishment, Guthelred entered, bearing the senseless form of a young female. They were both drenched with the heavy rain; but although Edric's father expressed his astonishment at his unexpected return, Guthelred took no heed of it, but bade him call his wife, as if he was well acquainted with his being married. When she appeared, in obedience to his command, he committed the young female to her charge, with strict injunctions to show her every attention, and then, without another word, he entered his mysterious room, which had been closed ever since his departure.

"Edric's mother did show the lady every attention; and when she revived, she uttered a long string of passionate incoherencies which they could not understand, for they were in a foreign tongue. Day passed after day, and the lady grew paler and paler, and was quiet, and seemingly bore her imprisonment patiently, although her unhappiness could not be mistaken. At last she tried to escape, got into the wood, and was overtaken; she was brought back, and then kept closely confined in an upper chamber; no one was permitted to approach her. Guthelred himself took her food daily, and none but he saw her—none even knew, but for the daily supply of food, that she was yet living, and it became, in fact, a conjecture on the part of Edric's mother and father whether she still existed or not. The question was, however, decided by Guthelred's appearing suddenly one day to Edric's father, and bidding him to fetch a priest from the village with speed. He obeyed him, believing fully that it was to hear her last shrift, and lost no time in returning with an old father, since dead. Judge what his suprise was when he found he was wanted to perform the ceremony of marriage. It was performed, and the priest, with a handsome recompense, was dismissed; and then the lady was suffered to roam about the building, and even to wander in the forest or garden with Edric's mother. She never smiled, and scarcely ever uttered a sound, save to Guthelred, and when she did to him, her words were few and in

a complaining tone, yet withal gentle, and free from all harshness. In time she bore him a son, the Chevalier Leon, and it seemingly had the effect of making her more resigned to her enthralment; but when he was two years old he was sent away, and then her heart broke—she never looked up again, she pined away, grew fainter and weaker every day, and neither Edric's father nor mother were surprised to hear one morning from Guthelred that she had died in the night. They went according to his directions, and found her lying in her bed, her face calm and placid as though she was but in a gentle sleep; but it was too true, her spirit had passed away. She, too, was buried in the garden, in the same grave as his first wife, and one small stone marks the resting-place of both. When she had been laid in the earth a week, Guthelred went away again, and returned seven years afterwards, bringing Leon with him; he, however, remained here until about six years since, and then quitted, never to return. He was very old, and the account of his death, a year after his departure, did not surprise the parents of Edric, whom he had left in possession; for the same reasons which had driven away the servants preceding Edric's father were acted over again after he had returned with Leon, and after he had been sent away. They frequently found him stretched, as if dying, upon the threshold of his chamber, after hearing the most piteous shrieks; and when they told him how alarmed they were, he bade them fear not, for no harm would come to them, except they sought to know what they were forbidden to pry into, and, then, nothing could save them from a dreadful fate; they therefore took no notice, and treated it as a casualty. But there were others who saw the lights at night, heard the noises, and it was whispered he had destroyed both his wives for some diabolical purpose—that their spirits haunted the place, and fearfully tormented him for his wickedness; but whatever it was, nothing certain was ever known, and when he departed, the noises ceased, but the place still retained its dreadful reputation, and was shunned by all, save those who, like me, were tempted out of curiosity to visit it. Ah! I little thought that my inquisitiveness would get me a husband—and so good a one—for, of course, you understand that it was Edric who accosted me while I was looking at the place, and who never lost an opportunity of seeing me until he had made me his wife, and from the love I bore him, I was induced to give up my scruples and live here."

"The story is a strange one," said Violet, when she had concluded, "and very painful likewise. Did it ever transpire who the mother of the Chevalier Leon was?"

"No," answered Nanette; "I learned the story I have told you from Edric, and he from his mother, and I have told you all. The Chevalier Leon may know, but no one else I am sure."

"Poor thing!" ejaculated Flora, "what a dreadful fate was her's! Oh, how glad I shall be to get away from this horrid place. I shall never be able to sleep in it again. I know I shall imagine all sorts of horrible things, and frighten myself to death."

"You must keep up your spirits," said Nanette, suddenly dropping her voice to a whisper, "you have nothing to fear from anything unearthly; and as soon as your escape can be managed it will be done. It is the remembrance of the sad fate of the Chevalier's mother which has so interested me in your behalf, and will incite me to do everything in my power to get you safely away. Edric, too, will not be idle until we have succeeded."

Violet and Flora were in the act of offering her thanks when Gualtier knocked at the door, and brought a message from the Chevalier Leon to know if they were sufficiently restored from the fatigues of their journey to grant him an interview. Violet replied in the negative, and deferred it until the morrow, which reply Gualtier received with an appearance of profound respect. He then directed a few glances at Flora full of love, and intended to convey volumes, but as, unfortunately, she did not happen to perceive them, because her head was turned another way when they were glanced, he had the chagrin of departing with the full conviction that good as they were, they were lost. His was not, however, a nature prone to despair, and he comforted himself with the assurance that he should soon have an opportunity of speaking his intentions, which he deemed a more explicit method than looking, if the eyes talked ever so well, and much less likely to be misunderstood. He delivered Violet's reply to Leon, which was received without any comment being made. Leon appeared thoughtful for a few minutes, and then rousing himself, said to Gualtier that he would take a stroll through the forest, and should not return until the evening. He immediately quitted the building, and sauntering among the trees, disappeared, while Gualtier sought out Martin du Bois, to acquaint him with the movements of his master.

During the afternoon, Flora being overcome with drowsiness, arising from not being sufficiently rested after her journey, yielding to the persuasions of Violet, retired to her couch, and was soon in a deep slumber. Violet having watched her, until she felt a fit of deep despondency creeping over her, endeavoured to shake it off, but in vain. To assist her efforts, she quitted the sleeping-room, and re-entered the one in which she had breakfasted, thinking that by action and change of place she might accomplish it; but, when there, she sunk into a chair, and, in spite of herself, became buried in thoughts of the most painful nature. So profound was her abstraction, that she did not observe Martin du Bois enter the room, and place himself before her, nor was aware of his presence until he spoke, which he did in a tone of voice intended to be highly sarcastic.

"Upon what matter does the gentle Violet ponder so deeply," he said, "that she is all unconscious of the approach and presence of one, whom, under a most mistaken impression, she deems an enemy?"

Violet started suddenly as his words fell upon her ear, and the look, as well as shudder with which she regarded him, was plainly indicative of the detestation and horror in which she held him. She rose, however, immediately from her seat, and said in as firm a tone as she could command, albeit she trembled from head to foot—

"The Chevalier Leon de la Agnelet, guilty as he has been, in conjunction with you, of committing the outrage of tearing me from my friends, has, at least, paid me the respect of not forcing his presence upon me, having sent his attendant to inquire of me, when I should be so recovered from the fatigues of a journey which his and thy wickedness compelled me to undergo, as to grant him an interview; he has my reply. You will remember that this is his house, and you cannot infringe upon the consideration he has thought proper to show me, without having to account to him, for your violation of his rights as master of this dwelling. I have only to add, that your presence, after the villanous deeds you have been guilty of, fills me with a horror which nothing in nature can equal—a disgust that has no parallel; and in commanding your absence—"

"Not so fast my *gentle* Violet," interrupted Martin,

laying a stress upon the word gentle. "Beshrew me! but thou hast gathered spirit and courage from late incidents, and well they sit on one so fair. I like to see them, and though they teach thee to vent their rancour upon me, yet am I not averse to their presence. I am sorry I have not time to descant upon their beauties, but my time is short, and I must confer with you upon matters of more importance—to myself, at least."

"I will not hear you," she exclaimed.

"You shall," he replied; "you cannot help yourself."

"I will appeal to the Chevalier Leon," she exclaimed. "He prevented you on our journey hither from distressing me by your painful attentions or conversation; and now you have broken through a courtesy which he has seen proper to display; he will not, I am convinced, permit you to persist in thrusting your hateful person into my presence."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed scornfully; "let me relieve you from a false notion under which you labour—the Chevalier Leon is not within hearing by a mile or so; the retainers and people pertaining to this dwelling, are still further away; even Gualtier, who, if he heard shrieks loud enough to deprive him of his sense of hearing, would unheed them, is not near; there is no one in the building, save yourself, your friend, the simple Flora, the woman who lives here, and I; therefore, you have no alternative but to listen to me. You deem me an enemy?"

"The vilest."

"You are wrong, I swear you are. I am a friend; would be one to you—aye, and will be."

"Spare yourself the trouble of even the thought; thy friendship would be more loathsome to me than is thy person."

"You speak bitterly against me."

"And feel so."

"I did not believe that one so gentle as you have ever been, could bear a hatred so deep as that with which you appear to regard me."

"There is not a thing in nature, however humble or abject it may be, will not turn when an effort is made to crush it."

"I have never sought thy destruction—I have loved thee too dearly."

Loved me!" she echoed scornfully.

Aye, to desperation," he replied fervently; "thou knowest I did. When in Brenchley I offered thee my hand, thou didst decline it. Still it was no desire for thy destruction that made me proffer it, and then thou didst not treat me with the loathing which you now display,"

"I knew naught then of thy guiltiness."

"Nor now, but what thou hast heard from one whose villany to my father and to myself induces him to utter lies to screen his own infamy."

"You are but more plainly evincing your own baseness by uttering so great a falsehood. Quit me at once; I do not require to be told of your wickedness to influence me against you. I have seen it too clearly established to doubt it. Once more I command you to leave me, and never again give me an opportunity of remembering that one so lost to all sense of honour or virtue exists."

"It is in vain to seek you to believe me other than a villain?"

"Utterly."

"Then as one you shall know me, if such be your pleasure; besides, it will save time, and that is of some consequence to me just now. It will bring us sooner to an understanding. Now hear me swear—'May everlasting perdition be my portion hereafter, but you shall be mine!'"

"Oh, heaven!"

"It is an oath no power on earth shall make me break. I will give you an alternative—it shall be either by your consent or force."

"You cannot be capable of so great a villany?"

"I am capable of a greater if occasion required it; you shall not even have time to consider, save a minute to answer 'yes' or 'no.' If you assent, I will bear you away from here, where, notwithstanding your expression of abhorrence for me, you shall possess every luxury which heart can desire, or art furnish; refuse, and this chamber shall be the instant witness of your shame—shall see you compelled to fall upon your knees and implore me to grant you that which you have yourself refused. You have heard my oath; could there be another form more binding, I would take it, to show you I mean to keep my word in defiance of prayers, tears, or entreaties. How say you—yes or no? Answer quickly, for I will put the construction of a negative upon your silence; nay, turn not now scarlet, now pale as ashes, 'twill avail you nothing. Mine I have sworn you shall be, and mine you shall be. Give me your answer—yes or no? Speak; I will not be trifled with."

"Heaven has never deserted me, it will not now—it will not now."

"We shall see. I never found heaven over ready to listen or respond to prayers from anybody, however good. If that is your only dependence, give it up, it is a frail one."

"Wretch!" almost shrieked Violet. "In Heaven I put my trust, and I feel it will *not* fail me."

"Oh! then we shall see what it does in your behalf. What is your answer, will you be mine—yes or no?"

"Though death awaited me upon the utterance of the word, I would answer as I do now—no! monster."

"Then if death follows in the consequences of your refusal, death you shall have. For perdition seize me! but you shall be mine this instant."

He sprung at her, but with a loud scream she eluded his grasp—the door was open, and she flew out of the room. On the threshold of the door was a flight of stone stairs upwards; before her was a corridor, which was so sinuous as to offer serious obstacles to flight; and, upon the impulse of the moment, she fled up the stairs shrieking for help, followed closely by Martin du Bois, who made several ineffectual clutches at her waving dress. Desperation lent her speed—she flew up the winding stairs, flight after flight, hearing the footsteps of Martin destroying the echo of her own. Twice she reached a corridor, but nothing presented itself as a place of refuge for her, and she was compelled to keep mounting the stairs with the horror of diminishing breath and exhaustion upon her. Still the frightful emergency of her situation compelled her to exercise her energies to the utmost, and she kept on, feeling as if each step must be the last—that she must drop, and yet the agony of her despair was so great she felt impelled to keep on for ever. Suddenly the stairs, before almost shrouded in darkness, grew lighter—she felt a rush of cold air upon her brow; a thought flashed across her, she was gaining the top of the tower, and be her exhaustion e'er so great, at least death was in her power to save her from the pollution of the villain pursuing her. It was easier—far easier—to die than become the prey of so ruthless a monster, and her heart leaped within her joyfully as she thought how gladly she would seize the alternative of leaping from that high place into the arms of death rather than become his victim—a fate which contained a thousand times more horror than such a death as was yet left her to clasp. Panting dreadfully, she increased her

speed up the spiral staircase, and came soon upon the turn which led to the top of the turret. She saw a massive door open before her—saw a flag waving and flapping backwards and forwards — large birds wheeling and screaming about in the wind that blew strongly, and with a bound she gained the open space on the top; she saw that the height was tremendous, and she turned her head to see where her pursuer had reached, ere she took the dreadful leap. She shrieked as she saw he had reached the doorway, and was just gaining the top; she placed her hand upon the battlements—one spring and all would be over; she would be safe from the infamy he had threatened her with, though lost for ever to all who were dear to her in the world beside. At this critical moment a voice burst upon her ear—oh, welcome sound!—it was not the voice of Martin; she heard its deep tones cry fiercely, but to her replete with music,

"Hold, villain!"

With the swiftness of a gleam of lightning, she directed her eyes to the new comer; she saw the progress of Martin forcibly arrested—saw him seized by the throat—the glittering blade of a long knife flash in the air—saw him held as an infant in the grasp of a giant; she looked on her preserver, beheld Edric, and she knew that she was safe. She uttered a cry—almost a shriek—of joy, and sinking upon her knees, threw up her hands in convulsive thanksgiving for her deliverance; the cool air, which on that high place rushed by with some force, alone preserved her from swooning: but the fright she had endured, coupled with her frantic exertion to escape from Martin, had so completely exhausted her, that she remained upon her knees in a state closely akin to insensibility.

Martin, finding himself thus suddenly and unceremoniously checked in his villany, turned like a tiger upon Edric; but being held as firmly as if gripped by an iron hand, and seeing a long knife within two inches of his eyes, he restrained his impetuosity, and strove to keep down the rage that boiled and fumed like an ungovernable torrent within him. After an ineffectual struggle to shake the young woodman off, he exclaimed, arrogantly and angrily,—

"Take thy hands from about my throat, thou hound! and hie thee back from whence thou cam'st, nor seek to thrust thy unmannered carcase where intrusion will cost thee thy life. Unhand me, and away! Dost thou see whom thou hold'st, knave? Unhand me, I say."

"You may say what you please," returned Edric, coolly, without loosening his hold one degree; "but I shall not move a finger from thy neck until I have safely stow'd thee where thou can'st do no harm. I do see whom I hold, and but for that, my knife would have felt whom I held ere mine eyes had made the discovery."

"Slave!" cried Martin, passionately.

"Not to my evil passions, as thou art," returned Edric; "it becomes thee well to bandy the terms 'knave,' and 'slave,' and 'hound!' who art so great a villain."

"Remove thy hands from me, serf—boor!" roared Martin, struggling to get free; "thy master shall know the unmannered, busy fools he keeps; and thy recompense shall be a toss from these battlements to the place beneath."

"It will be after thee, then," replied Edric; "for in doing this act, leaving my own inclining out of the question, I am but obeying orders."

"Orders!" repeated Martin.

"Aye! my master had his doubts of thee—deemed thee, I well believe, the knave thou art!" said Edric, "and ere he quitted, bade me keep a lynx-eye on thee; an' if thou did'st dare to enter yon lady's presence contrary to her will, and persisted in so doing, I was to seize hold of thee as now I hold thee, and put thee in a place where I now mean to place thee, until his return; which command I shall to the letter obey. Your abiding place will not be dull, for it abounds in spectres, imps, and sprites of all descriptions, who laugh, and gibe, and chatter, and grin; but an' thou'rt quiet, they will not harm thee; if thou should'st grow restive, I will not answer for the consequences:—come."

"Villain, stand back!" cried Martin, moved by Edric's description of the place he was about to confine him in, to a desperate determination not, if he could help it, to suffer himself to be taken there. "Let me free—I will answer to thy master for my conduct: let that suffice."

"It will not do for me," answered Edric; "I have nought to do with your promises. You have done worse than my master could have surmised; you have nearly caused the maiden's death. You ought to thank your stars you didn't produce your own, for I can tell you my blood was up, and but for a powerful effort of self-control, I would have buried my blade in your heart, and flung your vile carcase from this spot into the wood for the wolves to gorge. I shall parley no further with you—I shall bear you to your cell, and render you up to my master when he returns; it is useless to struggle or resist, for if you will not come quietly I will take you by force, and I will not promise that in such case my knife will remain unused—come."

"Take your hands from my throat, and I will go," said Martin, clenching his teeth with impotent rage, for he saw that resistance was vain.

"Not until I have deposited you in your dungeon," persisted Edric, with most imperturable coolness.

"You shall smart for this, knave!" cried Martin bitterly.

"Not as you will, I fancy," replied Edric drily; and then turned to Violet, saying gently, "Fear nothing further, lady; you shall not suffer a like alarm. Return to the room you quitted; you will there find my wife, and she will gladly administer you every attention which the fright you have suffered may require to calm."

"May Heaven reward you for your timely aid! my kind friend," ejaculated Violet, fervently.

"Violet, hear me!" said Martin, but was interrupted by her saying to Edric, rapidly,—

"Let him not speak to me—let me not hear his voice, I pray you!"

"He shall be dumb while you are near," returned Edric, "but you shall not be pained by his presence longer."

So saying, he gave Martin a jerk which nearly threw him from his feet, and putting him before him, thrust him through the doorway, by which they had gained access to the turret's top, and descended the steps at a rate which threatened some danger to Martin's limbs. Violet followed until she reached the chamber from which she had flown, and there found Nanette and Flora, unto whom she recounted the fright and villanous treatment she had undergone. Flora had been awakened by her screams, and was about to fly to her assistance, feeble as would have been the aid she could have offered, but was stayed by Nanette, who told her that Edric would rescue her from all danger, and she might be assured that his exertions would secure her safety. Notwithstanding the arguments she used, she had the greatest difficulty

to keep Flora in the room, and it was not until Violet made her appearance that she could in any degree be pacified.

"I am requested, gentle lady, by my master, the Chevalier Leon, to beg of you an interview immediately; he will detain you but a few minutes."

The moon had taken the place of the sun, and had changed twilight into moonlight, when Edric entered the room and said to Violet,—

"To-night?" asked Violet, in surprise.

"Immediately," returned Edric; "and requests that you will not deny him, as it relates to matters of

importance; and if I might be allowed to advise, you will not withhold your consent."

"Where does he wish the interview to take place?"

"In this room, I believe."

"Not alone?"

"No, in the presence of your friend; he only begs you to grant him a few words, but does not wish they should be so private as not to include her hearing them. Shall I say you will receive him?"

"You may, good Edric."

"I am glad you have given your consent; I am sure you will not repent it. Nanette, come with me." So saying, he retired, followed by his young wife.

Violet and Flora passed a few minutes in conjecturing what could be the purport of Leon's request, in praying that its tendency might not be similar to Martin's, and in trusting that Edric would, if such were the case, continue the friend he had hitherto shown himself. Flora was very sanguine, and was busy coining a set of favourable anticipations, when Leon appeared; his face looked pale, but that might nave been the effect of the moonlight; he was thoughtful, and his manner had lost much of its frivolous affectation; he advanced to Violet, and said in a voice changed considerably from what it ha been,—

"It is with the greatest pain and regret, gentle maiden, that I learn you have been subjected, during my absence, to insult and outrage as unmanly as brutal. I have learned from Edric that he interfered in your behalf at a moment whose emergency was frightful. I shall feel indebted to you if you will relate to me the circumstances connected with this monstrous occurrence. I would spare you the pain of the recital, but that I would hear from your own lips enough to justify me in the course I intend to pursue.'

"What need have I to tell you that Martin du Bois is a villain?" returned Violet, coldly; "he is your friend, and you must be conscious that all his deeds are instigated by his natural wickedness. Why seek of me a recital of that which my rescue, at a moment when I was about to commit my soul to heaven, rather than be in the power of so great a wretch, sufficiently explains."

"Your motive is just," answered Leon; "my motive only in asking the question was a consideration of honour."

"Honour!" repeated Violet, with a tinge of contempt in the doubting tone in which she spoke.

"Aye," replied Leon, quickly, nettled at her manner; "honour! maiden—I have many failings, I confess, but I trust a want of honour is not one, and though the person who insulted you, and whom you style my friend, hath raised my anger and indignation by his conduct to you to a height I have never known it before to attain, yet I would not give him the opportunity of charging me, in the event of any subterfuge he may attempt to make in defence of his vile act, with giving ear to a menial in preference to one whose rank is equal to a knight's. If I have from your lips a detail of his villany, he has no loop-hole to creep out of, and such is my reason for intruding upon you at such an hour, and with such a request."

There was so much deference in his manner, and so great an appearance of being the victim of wounded feelings in the sad tone of his voice, that Violet felt moved, and banishing somewhat of her coolness, related in as few words as possible what had transpired. Leon's features worked almost convulsively with passion as he listened to her, and when she had ceased he was a full minute ere he could trust himself to speak; when he could command his voice, he said.—

"You have met Martin du Bois before this event?"

"I have, under circumstances no less unfortunate, and even more villanous on his part than this, for then a frightful amount of bloodshed was the consequence of his wicked acts."

"Is it long since?"

"About a month."

"Hum! that accounts for his absence, and the fearful change in his appearance; pray did he not suffer for his conduct?"

"He did most dearly; but for a kindness of which he was most undeserving, he would have perished; but you can be no stranger to his villany, and I can but feel surprised that you should be so desirous to treat him honourably when you did not hesitate to break your word of honour to me."

"Break my word of honour to thee!" echoed Leon, with astonishment. "How?—when?—where?"

"You pledged me your word that I should be restored safely and uninjured to my friends; I trusted you, for you spoke as if you were sincere; but you have brought me hither instead, and forfeited the honour which you boasted had never been broken."

"But—but you consented to come hither," uttered Leon, as if bewildered.

"On the contrary, I implored thee to return me to my friends; you promised faithfully to do so; how have you kept your word?" inquired Violet, bitterly.

"But when I sent Gualtier to you," exclaimed Leon, "you returned me for answer that you would go to Exmoor, on condition that I did not notice to you during the journey the change in your sentiments; I gladly accepted of your terms, and my pleasure was so great that I once alluded to it; but perceiving by your countenance that your features underwent a change, I instantly imagined that you were displeased with me for having infringed the condition you had imposed, and fearing you would refuse to proceed if I repeated my offence, I carefully avoided making any allusion to our journey the rest of our progress."

"If Gualtier gave you the message you have said he did, he uttered gross falsehoods. I gave no such message, I most solemnly assure you."

"What!" cried Leon; "can it be possible the knave deceived me?"

"You shall judge. When he brought thy message I would listen to nothing but my return, which I was promised should be permitted, with the condition that I did not make any reference to it, or express a doubt that you would keep your promise while on the journey, which necessary steps of precaution might make long; for you were of such a peculiar frame of temper, that if I should be guilty of any such indiscretion, you would violate your word and bring us here. Indeed, so strong was my faith in your promise, that when I found myself at Exmoor, I fancied I must have forfeited the condition by some remark which I had not intended, or could not remember to have uttered."

"You have said sufficient, gentle maiden," returned Leon, his words trembling with strong feelings as he uttered them. "There has been some treachery here; I will search it out and punish those who have done it; my word is broken, my honour impeached with justice, but not through any fault of mine, save the great one in the first instance, of rudely, cruelly, and dishonourably tearing you from your friends. It is a poor excuse to you to say, that I was misled by Martin du Bois, but it is truth; however, you shall suffer no more through him, or me, for I will now take my farewell of you for ever; all I ask of you is to pardon what I have done, and to tell me so; it will relieve my mind of a heavy burden, which will

cling like an incubus to me should you deny me. I confess I do not deserve it, scarce dare hope for it, but that I am sure your nature is too gentle to withhold pardon where the error is of a weak head, not a bad heart, and where he who has erred strives to make every reparation in his power. As soon as you are able to bear the journey there shall be an escort to convey you to your friends, and while you are here you shall meet with much care and attention, nor have greater cause to fear than though you were both my beloved sisters."

"I know not your motive for taking me from my friends, I do not even desire to be made acquainted with it," she replied, "but if you keep your word, and place me within my father's arms uninsulted, unharmed, then will I gladly pardon the unkindness you have done me, for I believe that your conduct was occasioned by evil counsel, not by an evil nature."

"A thousand thanks for your goodness. Farewell, we may never meet again."

"Do you not accompany us to London?" interrupted Violet.

"I shall see that your journey is divested of as much fatigue as may be, and free from any occasion for fear," he answered. Violet bowed her head, and he proceeded, "and when in after times your thoughts may revert to the events with which we have been connected, if you will not think kindly, at least think not harshly, of Leon de la Agnelet."

As he concluded, he quitted the room, and proceeding to the lower apartment, he summoned Edric. When the latter entered his presence, he asked,—

"Where is Gualtier?"

"He is this moment returned; he has been away for about two hours," replied Edric.

"Send him to me instantly," said Leon.

"I will, sir," replied Edric, departing; while Leon paced up and down the apartment in a state of great excitement. He struck his forehead several times with his clenched fist, and even groaned with anguish of spirit.

"Cursed chance!" he muttered, "to have been thus cheated, gulled by so base a villain! to have had my honour abused by a heartless scoundrel—whose life, as an attainted traitor, has been in my hands a thousand times! To be made a scorn for others and myself!—to have lost all I could have prided myself upon, through the trickery of such an unprincipled, ungracious knave! S'death, I would have rather perished tenfold than have been drawn into this base, dishonourable affair. But I will be revenged upon him to the full, or by taking my life, now almost valueless, he shall complete the wrong he has so basely done me."

"You sent for me, my gracious master," exclaimed Gualtier, flippantly, suddenly entering the room.

Leon eyed him with the glance of a tiger.

"I did," he replied; "close that door."

Gualtier obeyed him; and when he had done it, Leon motioned him to approach closely. He did as desired, but saw instantly that something wrong had transpired—a guilty conscience immediately told him that his trick had been discovered; but he remembered that Martin du Bois had promised to bear him harmless, and he recovered in a slight degree the self-possession which he had lost for a moment, when he observed the sternness of Leon's demeanour, determining that Martin should have the full benefit of the blame.

"Now, knave!" said Leon, when he had approached sufficiently near, "tell me upon what terms you connived with Martin du Bois to make my honor a toy, my word a lie, and myself a puppet?"

"What terms!" repeated Gualtier, discovering instantly that the storm threatened to exceed by far what he had imagined.

"Aye! scoundrel," ground Leon through his teeth; "tell me, without equivocation, thou base, ungrateful hound!—for what consideration didst thou conspire with Martin du Bois to make me appear as base as thyself? Speak, knave! or, by heaven, I'll bury my anelas in thy ribs."

"I do not understand thee," muttered Gualtier, looking askew at the door which he had himself closed fast.

"Liar!" cried Leon, fiercely, "thou knowest why we are here at Exmoor instead of being in London, as I had pledged my honour we should be. Thou knowest who bade thee pervert the messages with which thou wert entrusted, and I know that some motive stronger than common made thee play me false. Speak on, rascal!—seek not to deceive me again, for 'an thou dost, call upon thy patron saint!—nought else shall save thee from my anger."

"What am I to answer?" said Gualtier, moodily, but intimidated by the violence of Leon's manner. "Of what do you charge me?"

"Dog! do you trifle with me?" roared Leon, drawing his dagger with sudden passion, and seizing Gualtier by the shoulder. "Speak, hound! was it thine own contrivance to tell me a lie, and make me believe the maidens came hither with their own consent?"

"No."

"Whose then?"

"Martin du Bois."

"It was he employed you?"

"It was."

"And what the inducement? Quick—no hesitation—speak!"

"Three hundred merks."

"Base, sordid villain! had'st thou been true, and detailed to me his underhanded 'haviour, thou should'st have had three thousand, had'st thou needed them."

"I wish I'd known that," exclaimed Gualtier, in tones of considerable disappointment.

"Had'st thou been honest and faithful, thou would'st have made it known to me without a thought of recompense, for thou hast been much beholden already to mine and my father's bounty; but thou art a dishonest, ungrateful rogue, and I am well pleased I have discovered thy rascality before thou hast been able to further compromise me. Albeit, thou hast done quite enough as it is. Pray what motive did Martin du Bois assign for wishing the maidens to continue their journey to Exmoor, instead of returning to London?"

"I do not know his motive."

"Dost thou suppose me idiot enough to believe he gave you no reason for desiring their presence here? Am I to understand that you entered so readily into his views that he proffered nothing but the money to urge you to behave so infamously to me?"

"No; but I tell you he gave no motive; he only said it was a matter of the highest importance that the girls should go to Exmoor. He did not, he said, care how it was to be accomplished so that they went—but go they must. And as I thought it was not betraying you—that your ends would be gained without your forfeiting your word—I should be doing you a service, I consented to do what he wished me. The contrivance was entirely his own."

"And what other matters passed between you?"

"None."

"It is false! I overheard Martin du Bois say to thee, when on our road hither, 'Hast thou done

aught for the three hundred merks?' and thou didst reply, 'It is earned.' I took no heed of it at the time, but now it assumes a serious aspect; tell me, knave, what was meant by that question and reply?"

"I have told thee!"

"Thou liest! the colloquy took place before I gave thee the message to the maiden. To what deed, I ask you, did it refer?"

"To—to—"

"No hesitation; I hold the life of a caitiff like thee of no account, and if thou dost still attempt to foist thy knaveries upon me I will discharge thee from my service and from life at the same moment, therefore utter nothing but truth."

Gualtier was evidently intimidated; he looked uneasily and nervously at Leon, whose eyes were glaring upon him beneath his knit brow like living coals. He did not like to confess the truth, but he was afraid to hold it back, until he felt the grasp of Leon's hand upon his shoulder tighten, and saw a nervous twitch of the fingers round the anelas, and then he said doggedly, but hastily—

"One of the maidens had an uncle, called Ethelbert, to whom he owed some bitter revenge, and he offered me three hundred merks to slay him, if he interfered while the maidens were being carried off."

"And you consented?"

"The sum seemed a large one to me; the foul fiend, I believe, was at my elbow. I thought I should never have such an opportunity again of getting so very large a sum, and—"

"You consented?"

"I did."

"Wretch! execrable scoundrel! and I was fool enough to esteem thee faithful, honest, and of a good heart! and thou vile—but no matter—you slew her uncle?"

"No; I missed him in the dark. It was he who wrote the lines upon the parchment found upon the body of Baldric."

"How knew you this?"

"Martin du Bois told me."

"You ought to thank heaven at least that crime was spared thee."

"I do, most fervently."

"Had you any other transactions with him?"

"One other scheme he proposed to me, to which I would not consent."

"What was it?"

"That during your absence he should endeavour to persuade the maiden called Violet to elope with him, and, if she would not consent, to take her by force; I was to provide the horses, await your arrival, and then, if you pursued him, to accompany and set you upon a false scent. I, however, point blank refused, and set off to search for you to tell you what he had proposed, but was unable to meet with you."

"I doubt not the truth of the first part, but do the latter most considerably."

"It is all true, as I am a living man!"

"And you left him to perpetrate his villany without hindrance, on pretence of seeking me—is it not so?"

"He promised not to attempt it for the present, or I would not have quitted him."

"I doubt it! he would not else, the instant you left, have endeavoured to put his scheme in practice—the unprincipled villain!"

"Did he?" asked Gualtier, in undisguished astonishment.

"He did; and had it not been for the timely interposition of Edric, she would have precipitated herself from the top of the turret, to have saved herself from the contamination of so trebly-damned a villain!"

"Has this transpired while I have been away?" asked Gualtier, eagerly.

"It has."

"Will you let me repay the vengeance you owe him?"

"Assuredly not, I shall take more effectual means. Besides, you do nothing more for me."

"Nothing more! you do not mean it—you cannot."

"We shall see. What ho! Edric!"

Edric made his appearance, and Leon said to him, with great decision of manner—

"Take Gualtier into your custody, and thrust him forth from the turret. If he resist, get the assistance of the rest of the people; and if he prowl about, or is seen in the neighbourhood after you have hurled him forth, treat him as you would a wolf haunting a fold, or a thief about gold."

"Hear me, hear me!" exclaimed Gualtier, earnestly "I have done wrong—very shamefully wrong, but do not thus cast me from thee."

"I have heard enough," replied Leon. Edric do as I have commanded you."

"Come," cried Edric, seizing hold of him as Leon quitted his, and commenced dragging him from the apartment; but Gualtier broke away from him, and falling upon his knees, and clasping his hands, cried earnestly—

"Forgive me, noble, honoured master, forgive me; I have done wrong, basely, wickedly deceived you, but forgive me; point out how to atone for my fault, and if I drop dead in the penance I will do it—forgive me! We are all liable to be led away; Martin du Bois even led you away, and why should I, tempted as I was by a large sum, be expected to stand when you fell? Have compassion on me and pardon me, or at least suspend your decision until you see what attempts I make to repair my error; set me face to face with him who has deceived all, and, though he were a giant encased to the eyes in steel, I would never leave him until he or I was slain. Hear me—forgive me, my kind, beloved master! Try me once more; if ever I again fail you, cut me down like a worthless weed. I have never before deceived you; pardon me this once, and repentance and your kindness will make me a better man than I have ever been. My nature is rough, but not evil; yet, if you will not forgive me, and I am cast forth, I shall become a villain—a hardened villain—for I shall then have nothing in the world to look forward to; but if you now pardon me, you will save me. Remember that I have been with you from boyhood."

"It is that makes me most bitter against thee," said Leon. "Thy ingratitude, thy treachery, is the more base."

"I acknowledge it; but it shall make me for the future more true than steel," urged Gualtier. "Pardon me now, and may the—"

"Hold! I want no oaths to bind thee to me. I have tried kindness, and if that has failed, I am sure thy oaths will not make thee more sincere; but I will try thee once more."

"God bless thee!" burst forth Gualtier.

"Peace—hear me out; I will pardon thee, but it is only for the sake of old recollections, because this is also thy first offence, and in consideration, likewise, of the temptation to which thou wert subjected, though that ought not to have moved thee; but before thou dost regain thy old place in my esteem, thou must give me good proof that thou hast well

repented of thy conduct, and art not likely to be guilty of anything approaching its villany again."

"Thou shalt thyself devise the penance, and no penitent ever performed the task imposed upon him with more devotion and more pleasure than will I."

"We shall see. Quit me, now; and do you, Edric, bring Martin du Bois to me."

Gualtier wrung his hand, which he seized before Leon could prevent him, and then sprung to his feet, exclaiming with the greatest enthusiasm,—

"May utter destruction seize me here and hereafter, if ever I forget or abuse your kindness!"

Leon waved his hand for him to depart, and Edric led him away; he would not permit him to accompany him to the cell in which Martin was confined, but gave him in charge to one or two retainers—for he seemed half mad—bidding them see he did not follow him, and then he went to the place in which he had imprisoned Martin. He found him in a state of the most fearful excitement, wrought up almost to the highest pitch of frenzy, in consequence of being the companion, as he vowed, of the most ghastly hideous spectres; had it not been for the wild incoherence of his manner, Edric would have laughed at his terror; but as it bordered on insanity, he repressed it, and endeavoured to restore him to his proper recollection—after a little while he succeeded. He was satisfied of the nature of the interview that would take place between him and Leon, and he resolved not to give him the chance of softening Leon's anger by any appearance of being unfit to defend himself; he, therefore, kept him back until the impression of what he swore he had seen was, in a great manner, evaporated, and he became conscious of his being in Edric's custody, and its cause.

"Whither are you taking me?" he demanded.

"To the Chevaliar Leon," replied Edric.

"You have told your tale, and had the wench's valuable aid to second all the lies you have thought proper to utter," sneered he. Edric tightened the grasp he had of his neck-piece on the impulse of the moment, and replied—

"Lies or no lies, you'll have to answer for your cowardly detestable villany; and I hope most heartily my master will commit you to my care for punishment: you shall not lose one quarter of what you deserve."

"You are an insolent hound," cried Martin, fiercely.

"But no villain," retorted Edric drily. He said no more, and in a few minutes they were in Leon's presence. Edric noticed that a slight spasm, a shudder of disgust and bitter scorn, seemed to pass over Leon's frame the moment his eye lighted on Martin's visage, and perceiving the expression of reckless defiance and impudent assumption of haughtiness and indifference it displayed, he easily surmised that the interview would be a stormy one. He released his hold of Martin, and Leon said—

"Leave us together," good Edric

He obeyed and quitted the room. Leon eyed Martin for a minute, and then said in a voice in which an attempted coolness was struggling for mastery with indignation—

"Are you not a villain?"

"Are you a saint?" retorted Martin, with an insolent laugh. Leon bit his lip until the blood came, in order to keep down his passion.

"I am not the contemptible, dishonourable, dishonouring scoundrel I have discovered you to be," he exclaimed, bitterly.

"You are free with your names," cried Martin, fiercely.

"And will be with my sword," returned Leon. "It is fortunate for thee that thou holdest a station equal to a knight; an' thou hadst not, I would have turned thee over to my people, and thou shouldst have been worried by them to death, as famished hounds would a wolf; but since it would render my honour liable to be impugned by refusing to cross weapons with thee, great knave as thou art, I must do my feelings the violence of treating thee as an equal, and inflicting upon thee, personally, the chastisement which, from thy utter worthlessness, I would fain should be bestowed by my servants."

"Pshaw!" cried Martin, with a taunting laugh; "this assumption of virtue—this outcry of wounded honour, sits awkwardly upon thee, Leon. Confess the truth, man; thou art only enraged that I should fly at thy game—that I should try to strike thy deer."

"Thou'rt a villain—a reckless, heartless ruffian! alike regardless of what is due to manliness or to honour," ejaculated Leon, with indignation; "a base, selfish caitiff, who would rather violate every tie sacred to humanity, than forego a purpose, however infamous."

"Rail on!" sneered Martin, "revilings come well from you, who had no compunctious visitings of honour in carrying off this girl, or in deceiving others."

"Thou liest!" roared Leon. "I was idiot enough to suffer my better feelings to be overcome by your insidious persuasions—I have been cheated, tricked, and dishonoured by you, thou dog! and thou shalt not quit me until I have wiped out the stain in thy base blood!"

"If thou can'st!" scornfully exclaimed Martin; "unless thy nice and discriminating honour sees fit to employ thy myrmidons here to set upon and murder me without giving me a chance of defending myself."

"Neither my honour, nor my greatest failings, ever taught me to offer to the unreflecting avarice of an ignorant serving man three hundred merks to slay one whom I had wronged, and feared to encounter," said Leon, contemptuously. "It is not likely, therefore, that you will have to fear the fate you basely insinuate; for I, the wronged party in this case, would stoop to no such vile proceeding, even though thy acts deserve thou should'st fall by the hands of those whose blood is less gentle than mine own."

"Ha!" exclaimed Martin, startled at words whose import he instantly understood. "Betrayed by that caitiff, Gualtier!"

"He who deals in knavish deceit must expect to be played false," returned Leon; "had he turned upon thee with his dagger instead of his tongue, 'twould have been no more than ye merited. I shall not, however, waste many more words upon you. Know that I have learned from the lips of the maiden whom thou didst so villanously attack, an account of thy vile deeds while at Brenchley, the particulars also of thy base outrage a few hours since, attested by him who rescued her and incarcerated thee. From Gualtier I learned thy mean object and criminal tamperings to make him unfaithful, and me to appear barren of honour; added to this, you have infringed every tie sacred to hospitality, by grievously maltreating one who, had she been by her own consent here, would have been under my especial care and protecton, but who, having been compulsorily made an inmate, yet possessing my word of honour for her safety, had a tenfold right to be held free from even a look of insult. Upon either of these infamous deeds I should feel bound to appeal to my sword for reparation, and upon all united, will do so with the determination

that you shall either add to the wrong you have done me by slaying me, or I will efface the remembrance of thee and thy infamy in thy death; at the same time bidding thee remember, that were it not for the 'nice discrimination of my honour,' I could make thee a prisoner, and through thy father's crimes, being an attainted traitor, consign thee to an ignominious death upon the scaffold; but I scorn to take a revenge in such a fashion, when I feel that its consummation is in my own hands."

"Stay," said Martin, as he observed Leon about to prepare to lead the way from the room, in order to put his resolve into execution. "Stay! I will acknowledge that I have not treated you well—"

"Well!" echoed Leon, with a scornful laugh.

"Aye, that I have done you wrong, great wrong, if you will," continued Martin. "I will confess that I have acted ungratefully to appearance—"

"Basely in reality," interrupted Leon.

"Basely, if it please you better," returned Martin. "I care not for terms, inasmuch as having received favours from you—shelter from enemies—I ought to have foregone something to have kept faith with you; but there are frequently considerations which are of more importance than mere acts of ingratitude."

"There is no consideration superior to honour," exclaimed Leon, haughtily.

"Pshaw!" ridiculed Martin. "I am not one of those fools of fashion that would sacrifice an end for the sake of considering the means I should employ. The end justifies the means with me."

"And with all knaves! All selfish base-minded rogues support the same doctrine; for the ends and aims of honest and honourable men require no vile means to bring them to pass," ejaculated Leon.

"That's a matter of opinion," observed Martin, coolly. "The acts of other persons may compel those you style honest and honourable men to employ modes they would otherwise be ashamed to use, to counteract the circumstances into which they had been thrown; such has been my case."

"I wish to hear nothing more than I know already," interrupted Leon, with an impatient wave of the hand; "you have acted as a villain, and no provocation can justify what you have done. Follow me; you shall be provided with a sword, and then support your deeds with your weapon; I will attend to nothing else."

"You are too hasty, Leon," urged Martin.

"I cannot be too hasty to chastise unjustifiable baseness," cried Leon, scornfully.

"I would not submit to your revilings or your scorn, Leon," said Martin, "but that being conscious I have been too inconsiderate in my desire to avenge injuries I have received, I have overstepped what was due by me to you. I would not lightly part with your friendship—"

"Faugh!" contemptuously, exclaimed Leon.

"Nay, Leon, we may yet be friends; I can explain all away."

"Friends!" echoed Leon; "friends, never! I would rather trust myself in the power of a wolf, expecting from it the faithfulness and affection of a dog; but I will hear no more. Follow me!"

"Will you not hear what I have to say?"

"I have heard too much, I am impatient to remove from my breast the load you have placed there; follow, without more words."

"It is night, you will not decide this matter to-night?"

"This instant."

"Pshaw! 'twould be madness; at least wait until the morning light enables us to see what we are about."

"The moon is bright enough for our purpose."

"You are too rash, Leon; I am, I know, the better swordsman, and I would not have you fall by my hand."

"I scorn your consideration, and doubt your superiority with your weapon; come."

"Why will you not listen to me? If you will but hear me, I can, I am satisfied, make an alteration in thy sentiments."

"I will lend no ear to thy base artifices; I have already been too deeply their victim; thy vile subterfuges shall no longer trick or dupe me, nor will I stay longer to bandy words with thee—follow me at once."

"Whence?"

"To a spot a short distance hence, that the ears of those you have been the cause of being wronged may not be offended, even by the sound of your chastisement—"

"And where, in case my arm proves successful, I may have to encounter thy people to accomplish what you failed to do."

"An' thou wert not an immeasurable villain, thou would'st suffer no such thought to cross thee. Should'st thou prove successful, the way will be clear for thee to depart, nor will any one follow thee; but if thou dost attempt to return, in order to carry out thy base designs upon the maidens who have already suffered so much through thee, thy life will not be of half an hour's value."

"I may feel inclined to run the risk, still I would have thee consider before thou dost rashly run upon thy death. I would not harm thee, albeit thou dost consider me so great a villain."

"Aye, and coward too, an' thou still dost hesitate to follow me."

"Coward!" echoed Martin, fiercely.

"Aye! a base, mean-spirited, abject coward!—a vile poltroon, who, great in villany, wants the bravery to defend the crimes he is courageous enough against all honour to commit."

"Wert thou my own brother, whom I had loved from infancy, those words should seal thy doom."

"I thank God I am neither kith nor kin, nor, though of the same form, the same kind! Follow me ere I spit upon thee, dog!"

"By hell and all its fiends! Leon de la Agnelet, an' thou repeat'st thy words, I'll not wait to slay thee with my sword, but fasten upon thy throat and twist death round it, ere thou canst utter more of thy bitter spleen."

"Foh!" laughed Leon, derisively; "an' thou dost not at once follow me, I'll beat thee with a cudgel!"

"Give me a sword."

"You shall have one when we reach the ground."

"Lead on, and may curses light on and blast me, if I spare thee!"

"If thou hast the chance; nor will I thee, if Heaven grant me success."

Leon quitted the room, followed by Martin, and, descending the stairs, they passed out of the building, Leon giving strict orders to Edric and to Gualtier, who were with him, not to follow them unless he returned not in two hours.

"If I should not," he said, "you will find me upon the mound that overlooks the forest between the elm trees, and see that I am placed in my mother's grave. What other matters I may need done you will find contained in a scroll I have placed in the cabinet standing in the room I have just quitted, and proceed scrupulously with the orders I have given thee respecting the maidens who are sojourning here—"

"Dear master, may I not accompany you," exclaimed Gualtier.

"No," he replied, "nor follow, nor suffer any one to follow, or intrude upon the spot until the time I have given you has elapsed. I am determined upon this point. He who would disobey me will incur my greatest displeasure, nor will he ever obtain my forgiveness."

Gualtier hung his head, and Edric promised that his order should be strictly obeyed, but trusted that heaven would not desert the just and right, and that they should, therefore, see him back soon. Duels and matters of the nature in which Leon and Martin were about to engage, were of too frequent occurrence for them to have a doubt what was to be done, and much as they for their master's sake wished to be present, the order was too sternly given for them lightly to disobey it. But when they had departed, Gualtier said to Edric—

"I doubt treachery on the part of this Martin du Bois. I will follow and see he takes no advantage."

"You forget the order," said Edric, holding him back.

"But if Martin du Bois forgets what's fair, I shall have done right not to remember it. Take your hands from me, good Edric, I will take care I am not seen until my presence is necessary, or not at all if it is not required.

"I cannot suffer you to go," replied Edric, relaxing the hold of his collar, which Gualtier noticed, with a smile.

"But I must," he said, and broke away, Edric scarcely trying to stay him, or attempting to follow and bring him back again.

Leon de la Aguelet and Martin du Bois pursued their way in silence, threading amongst the vast trees of sombre aspect, crushing dead leaves and withered boughs beneath their feet; the only noise, save the croaking of some reptile they disturbed in their progress, which arose in the night air—for it was a cloudless, windless night, and the broad moon was passing over the heavens slowly, and, as it seemed, silently, making all the place around appear quiet and still and very solemn.

As the two passed on—about to make a desperate venture for each other's life—their breasts were loaded deeply with thoughts heavy and anxious. They exchanged no words, but now and then, as their eyes met, glances of fierce hatred and scorn darted from them, and they impulsively increased their pace, that they might reach the spot on which their sanguinary feud was to be decided. No sound or sight met them in their progress but those mentioned, and, after a quarter of an hour's journey, they reached the mound of which Leon had spoken, and mounted it. It was rather high, but when they had gained the top, Martin perceived that the reason Leon had chosen it for their contest was, that it was a more open space than any other spot in the neighbourhood, and therefore better calculated for it.

As soon as Leon had arrived at the elm trees, which grew near the border of the hill, he stopped, and confronting Martin, gave him the choice of two swords he had with him; he took one, and was about to make some observation, but Leon impatiently waved his hand, and placed himself in a posture of offence; Martin immediately did the same; and then, foot to foot, and point to point, they commenced their conflict. As they both knew life depended upon their efforts, their proceedings were made with the greatest caution and judgment, the more especially as having moonlight only to fight by, rendered it highly necessary not to give or let slip the slightest chance. Soon their thrusts, foins, and lunges, made with all the fierceness the bitterest hatred could inspire, warmed them into more furious action, and, by dint of considerable dexterity, Leon contrived to wound Martin in the fleshy part of the arm; he strove so hard to repay it, that they were both hard breathed by their efforts of attack and defence; by tacit consent they paused to recover their breath, and for a time ceased the conflict.

Leon leaned against a tree, and placed the point of his sword upon the ground, while he wiped the perspiration which flowed profusely from his forehead; the instant his hand was to his forehead Martin sprung like a tiger upon him, and with a triumphant laugh passed his sword through his breast with such force that it snapped against the trunk of the elm upon which he was leaning. He uttered a shriek of agony, and his eyes glared wildly upon Martin, who cowered beneath their dreadful gaze; he drew his weapon out and received upon it a fearful blow from Leon's sword, and then the ill-fated gallant turned round, staggered, and fell senseless.

Martin looked upon him for a minute as if fascinated by the fearful sight, but hearing a hasty footstep approach, he looked up, and to his intense horror he saw bounding towards him, and heard his cry of exultation!—ETHELBERT EVESHAM. He uttered a yell of fright, almost of despair, and turning swiftly from him, fled like a frightened hind, leaving the murdered man alone with his face upturned to the cold moon, and his blood seeping through the green turf on which he was lying.

CHAPTER VII.

"With that he gave his able horse the head,
And, bending forward, struck his armed heels
Against the panting sides of his poor jade
Up to his rowel-head; and, starting so,
He seemed in running to devour the way,
Staying no longer question."

SHAKSPERE.

"Mischief, thou art afoot;
Take thou what course thou wilt."

SHAKSPERE.

"Oh, what an agony of soul was his!
Baffled just at the moment of success."

THE CONQUEROR.

THE Earl of Derby, Sir Walter Manny, and the whole of the troop under their command, remained at Ghent in expectation of the return of Edward's answer to the overtures made by Jacob Von Artaveld on behalf of the Flemings, and received every attention and hospitality it was in the worthy brewer's power to show them.

Wat Tyler found his situation as squire productive of considerable pleasure and improvement as to position. His duties were light, and Sir Walter took care that they should be as little of a menial character as possible, while the advantages were very great; the only matter which was a source of regret was that he was inactive; doing nothing to gain a name and title, that he might shorten the time when he could claim Violet as his own. How often he thought of her!—how frequently did he draw comparisons between her and others—how often did he trace analogies in his thoughts, and feelings, and actions now, and in those he had and did when with her in Brenchley; but had his thoughts of her been more infrequent, he had one at his elbow to remind him—one whose earnestness, whose truth and affectionateness would never have suffered him, could he

have done so impossible a thing, to forget her—it was his friend Michael; there was no time or opportunity he suffered to pass without referring to her or Flora, and feeling that had any one spoken to him often and praisingly of the latter he should have loved them for that one thing, he was quite loquacious to Wat respecting Violet; believing that he felt the same, and if there was anything required to strengthen the friendship that existed between them, that was the way to do it. Wa was at no loss to perceive his motive, nor backward in awarding it its full meed, but he needed no such proof to understand the depth of Michael's friendship, when it had stood him in stead where life and death were concerned; but it helped to show him that there were hearts in the world which were as true as steel, and uninfluenced by any selfish consideration.

The honest smith too, Leowulf, the redoubtable captain of the "Hammers," as Sir Walter Manny had facetiously designated the little troop which he commanded, took every occasion to show Wat that he esteemed him as having the first place in his heart, and looked upon him as one destined to be one day an honour to his name and country. He was frequently with Wat, but never left him without sending his compliments to Sir Walter Manny, to know when his "hammers" would be wanted; and if they were not for some time needed for Edward's service, whether there was not some little choice piece of hard fighting to be done somewhere for somebody, as his "hammers" were weary of lying idle, and his bonny five-foot blade of fire-proved steel was, he was afraid, getting rusty in its scabbard. On one occasion, when Wat delivered his message, Sir Walter replied, laughingly,—

"By'r Lady! but the iron will soon be hot enough to strike, and I shall have good need of the aid of the smith and his "Hammers." I will tell thee, Wat, for I know thy high-mindedness will not misunderstand my feelings or my motives, what I purpose doing. Thou hast told me the gentle Violet has promised to present me with a banner worked by her own fair hands. Now, Wat, my devotion for her, as thou knowest, though in expectation hopeless, is as deep and pure as man's for woman may be, and I have resolved to display it by doing some deed which shall fit me to receive her gift, and when it is mine, another, which shall prove me not unworthy to bear it. I have, therefore, come to the resolution, that immediately Edward declares war with Philip of Valois, to ride through Brabant, make the first incursion into France, and carry by assault the first place, be it city or castle. I shall take Leowulf with me, and as we shall have, in all probability, desperate work, only those who, aware of the danger of the expedition, will volunteer to come."

"By heavens!" exclaimed Wat, enthusiastically; "noble resolve. You will, of course, take me with you?"

"It rests with yourself; if you volunteer, most gladly will I," replied Sir Walter.

"Volunteer!" repeated Wat, "I would not be left behind on any consideration in the world."

"I thought not," smiled Sir Walter; "and your presence will be most acceptable both as a friend and a follower, upon whom I can place entire dependence."

"Michael Ryeheart will come also," said Wat; he would be broken-hearted to be left behind; and I am positive Leowulf's second-in-command, Mark Grayling, will make one of the party."

"I shall not take more than forty or fifty lances at the utmost, and those who first volunteer will be chosen," observed Sir Walter.

"I will manage that, if you will intrust me with the commission of making it known," exclaimed Wat, rubbing his hands with gleeful anticipation of the expedition.

"Certainly," returned Sir Walter, "but do not mention this matter until our advices reach us from Edward; if it is known prematurely, the whole affair will be spoiled."

"I will be secret as death until you tell me when to divulge it," replied Wat; "and if the devotion and courage of those who accompany you will ensure you success, it will, I am satisfied, be in your power to command it."

"We will make a bold venture for it, Wat," exclaimed Sir Walter, "and will deserve it if we fail in obtaining it."

A few words more passed, and then the subject was changed. A fortnight elapsed ere Edward's reply was received. It contained a promise to come over to Antwerp immediately, and if he received sufficient assurances from the Duke of Brabant, the Duke of Gueldres, his brother-in-law, the Marquis of Juliers, Lord John of Hainault, and all those who had promised to co-operate and assist him, that they would keep their word, he would at once make war upon France. His message gave great satisfaction; and preparations, on an extensive and magnificent scale, were made to receive him. Amongst those who formed the embassy was our friend Bullfric, who having discovered that, notwithstanding the exercise of his greatest cunning and dexterity, the wealth of Rubacelle had been so thoroughly secured that no portion of it could be transferred to his own private emolument, thought it would be as well to return to his wife and the lady who owned the property, and see what a little artifice could produce. His arrival occasioned some surprise among his immediate acquaintances, we will not say friends, excepting his kind-hearted wife, who, with all his faults, loved him still.

But this is not to be wondered at, for the love of woman is enduring, and clings to the object of its affection through good and evil, pain and pleasure—soothing and aiding in sorrow and sickness—smiling and ministering to delight in happy hours—remaining firm and unshaken when in the hour of disgrace, affliction, and poverty, all the world besides forsakes—vanishing only when death himself steps in and ends it. Such was Katrine's love for Bullfric—unfortunately a flower wasted upon a rock—a gleam of sunshine on a stagnant pool, playing upon its surface, but not capable of penetrating its murky interior.

He had but one thought—self. So long as that important consideration was fully met and satisfied, so long was he comfortable. In love with the world and every body besides, disposed to behave moderately on a moderate scale, and be what is termed a respectable sort of an individual; but if self was any way in jeopardy, if its wants and wishes became circumscribed, then he was not scrupulous enough to be checked by any means, however questionable, to remove the limits, and place "the self" upon the pinnacle which he believed to be its proper station. The wishes of "the self" had been grievously checked by the close seal put upon Rubacelle's property, and being in one way prevented from laying his hands upon it, his imagination grew fertile, his disposition and promise to be everything in future that was honourable and estimable vanished, and he began conceiving projects of obtaining at least half of the wealth of which he was steward, and which it appeared to him highly unjust should be the property of one person only.

Directly he learned that Rubacelle was sojourning at the mansion of Jacob Von Arteveld, it struck him that he could, from a thorough knowledge of the

building, get her in his power, and compel her either to grant him a large sum of money, or at least have such control over it that his object would be completely attained. He saw no good in being a steward, unless he could be a receiver-general on his own account as well, and as the plan just mentioned appeared to him to be the most feasible he could invent, he resolved to put it in force, and by a little stratagem got himself included in the embassy, and, as stated, to the surprise of all, made his appearance at Ghent.

Wat Tyler, who did not want shrewdness, suspected Bullfric's alleged motive, that of being unable to live without the society of his dear wife, to any extent

which amounted to an entire disbelief; but as he could not surmise his real one, he contented himself with keeping a particularly sharp eye upon him—a surveillance that Bullfric was neither slow to discover, be annoyed at, nor to resolve to outwit. He therefore laid a variety of plans, and believed the one he selected so cunningly devised, so complete in its arrangements, that he should overreach Wat, gain possession of Rubacelle, and consequently the object at which he was aiming.

When he arrived at Jacob Von Artaveld's, he was greeted by the members of the establishment as an old friend; for he had been in the brewer's service, and not having an opportunity to display any rascality before he quitted to join the troops of Sir Walter Manny, he was received with frankness, and when it was known Katrine was his wife, he easily obtained free access to the private apartments of the mansion. He behaved himself with a marvellous degree of graciousness, appeared devoted to his wife, acted as if he felt the tenderest solicitude for her happiness, and exhibited such remarkable kindness, that he agreeably surprised her, for she decidedly never knew him to be so amiable before, and strengthened Wat's suspicions most considerably.

Being quite satisfied that there existed some strong motive for his conduct, he determined to find it out, and after some reflection he could only trace it to Rubacelle—to one in which her person or her money was concerned—perhaps both, for he had not forgotten how strongly he had stipulated, when they had first entered the miser's house, at Cadsant, that the maiden should be his, and in the conflict which ensued between him and Wat he seemed actuated more by the desire to obtain Rubacelle than he did the profusion of wealth by which they were surrounded, and which, after all his struggles, was, as yet, kept from his grasp. He shuddered as the thought struck him that Bullfric might be villain enough to attempt, and possibly succeed, at a time when friends' vigilance slumbered, to obtain by stratagem what he had failed to gain by force, and on the first impulse resolved to challenge him with his suspicion, and bid him beware; but upon second thoughts he esteemed it the wisest plan to keep a strict watch upon him, and if he did attempt any villany, to be at hand to prevent it, and punish him so thoroughly that he should never have it in his power to repeat his knavery. As the duties which Wat had to perform, principally of attendance, prevented him keeping Bullfric in sight so frequently as he could wish, he communicated to Michael his mistrust, and commissioned him, while he happened to be absent, to keep an eye on Bullfric; at the same time cautioning him to act with such circumspection that Bullfric should not be conscious that there was a second person who noted his movements with the closest scrutiny. Michael did his best to fulfil Wat's directions, and succeeded admirably, for his natural frankness of manner, and his apparent want of crediting that all things were not what they seemed, effectually kept down any suspicion Bullfric might have had of him in finding him frequently and unexpectedly at his elbow. It had several times happened that Wat's absence had created an opportunity to put his scheme in practice, and just as he was about to venture it, Michael suddenly appeared, and kept to him with a tenacity he was annoyed at, as it prevented his proceeding, but which he did not suspect, even though it occurred frequently; he only thought it a cursed mischance which compelled him to defer his project to another opportunity, which time at length, to his joy, he believed had arrived.

A grand display of a passage of arms, of wrestling, and archery, was given by Jacob Von Arteveld to the Earl of Derby, Sir Walter Manny, and the Duke of Brabant, who had come to Antwerp to visit the Earl and Knight: it was held in the suburbs of Ghent, and on such a magnificent scale, that there was scarcely an inhabitant who was not present, as well as the whole of the English force, the train and escort of the Duke of Brabant, and the troops in the pay of Jacob Von Arteveld. Permission was granted also to the servants of his household to witness it, and some two or three old retainers. There were no attendants left in the mansion. Upon this Bullfric calculated, and likewise upon the illness of a daughter of Jacob Von Arteveld, who was dying of a decline, preventing Rubacelle from visiting this grand sight. She had taken a great liking to her, and had begged of her, when she heard of the entertainment, to remain with her, in order that she might not be left alone with only her sad thoughts for company. Rubacelle consented, and Bullfric knowing this, determined to return, put in practice a device to draw Rubacelle away from the dying girl without being seen, and then, when no one was near, to carry her off to a small cell which he had prepared for her reception beneath the mansion, and to keep her there until she had made over a large portion of her wealth to him, by a written deed, and given a sacred oath never to divulge what he had done to obtain it. He felt perfectly assured of the success of his scheme, saw no obstacle to prevent it; he determined to take Katrine with him to the display, to leave her while he executed his vile project, and then return, making an excuse of duty for absence.

He knew Wat would be there in close attendance upon Sir Walter Manny, and would be too much occupied to notice his temporary absence, or if he did, he believed he could have no suspicion of the real cause, and therefore could do nothing to prevent him; he did not care afterwards what he suspected; he would take such precaution not to be seen in the mansion by any of the attendants, and manage the whole affair so secretly, that if he openly charged him with Rubacelle's abduction, he would not be enabled to prove anything against him. Thus, he fully believed his plan was so perfect, that there was no chance of its being defeated. It however so happened, that Wat Tyler, being aware that Rubacelle would remain in the mansion by the sick couch of her who was passing slowly, but surely away, and knowing that there would be none near to aid her were Bullfric to take the opportunity of assaulting her, he made a point of commanding his attendance in such a manner, that, although it was a holiday, and the men were nearly all free to do as they pleased, he could not, without incurring mistrust, avoid obeying, but trusted to some busy moment to escape, when there was no likelihood of his being missed. Wat also paid a fellow to keep watch near Rubacelle's apartments, to see that none approached them without his knowledge; if any one did, he was to stay and question them, and if they did not return a satisfactory answer he was to prevent their further progress; or, being unable to do that, was to give immediate notice to Wat, nor lose an instant, using his best speed in doing it.

When the time arrived, and thousands were assembled to witness the sport, Wat kept a lynx-eye upon Bullfric, whom he had taken care should be within his sight, while Katrine was placed in a gallery erected to receive ladies only—an arrangement which quite met Bullfric's views. During the feat of wrestling Sir Walter sent a message by Wat to the Earl of Derby, who happened to be at a short distance. He galloped off, being on horseback, and delivered it. As he was returning with the answer, his eye caught

sight of the man he had placed there to watch the apartments. He instantly feared his surmises had been true, and spurring his horse to him, he leaned forward, and seizing him by the shoulder, said hastily—

"How now? what brings you here?"

The man looked dreadfully disconcerted, and stared at Wat with open mouth, but gave no answer.

"Speak, knave," roared Wat, shaking him forcibly; "hast thou lost thy tongue; hast thou seen any one, and come here in search of me?"

"No," muttered the man.

"Then, villain, how came you here?"

"Why, 'an so please you, I wanted to see the sight," mumbled the man, drawling out his words slowly and stammeringly, "and I thought if I ran up for a few minutes I should'nt be missed, and as every one was here there would, to be sure, be nobody come there, and—and—and—so—here I am."

"Fool!" cried Wat, in a rage, thrusting him back, but made no reply. He galloped off to Sir Walter, delivered his message as speedily as he could, and quitting him, looked sharply out for Bullfric, but he was nowhere to be seen—he was gone! His mind misgave him; he rode up to Michael, who was near, and exclaimed—

"Bullfric was here scarcely a moment since: where is he?"

"He left after you galloped away," replied Michael.

"Which path did he take?" he demanded, hastily.

"That way," he returned, pointing towards the spot where Jacob Von Artaveld's house stood. "Why? do you suspect he is up to any foul play? if you do, I'll be after him like an arrow from a yew-tree bow, and if I catch him at any tricks I'll clip his ears."

"I suspect the worst," answered Wat; "but I will myself see to it. Come with me to Sir Walter, and should he need any attendance, be at hand to render it."

"With all my heart," said Michael, following Wat who made towards Sir Walter Manny the moment he had ceased speaking. When he reached him he whispered to him—

"You will do me a great favour by suffering my absence for a short time, an important matter of pressing emergency, even to saving one from the most dangerous strait, requires my instant presence; Michael will be at hand to render you such services as you may require if you permit me to depart."

"What is the affair?" asked Sir Walter, with surprise.

"I have not time to explain—I will, immediately I have succeeded, make you acquainted with all; you will allow me to depart?"

"Certainly," replied Sir Walter.

"A thousand thanks," cried Wat, and sticking his spurs hard in his horse's sides, galloped off in the direction which Bullfric had taken at his swiftest speed. He was not long in reaching the brewer's house; an old retainer was standing at the entrance. Wat flung the reins upon the neck of his steed, dismounted at a leap, and, running up to him, said—

"Has any one passed you recently?"

"Eh?" asked the old man, putting his hand to his ear to assist the sound reaching it—an indication of deafness which Wat viewed with considerable impatience.

"Who passed you just now," he shouted, giving him no chance of not hearing him.

"Who passed me just now?" repeated the old man, in a thin piping voice.

"Yes!" roared Wat.

"Oh! let me see, let me see—I think it was, it was—a soldier—I think it was a soldier."

"Are you not sure," cried Wat.

"Am I not sure? Why—a—yes, it was a trooper; yes—it was a trooper: I remember now who it was."

"Who?" interrupted Wat impetuously.

"A—a—dear me, that I should forget his name—hum—he lived here once—Tush, let me see, what is his name? and I know him so well."

"Was it Bullfric?" roared Wat, with fiery impatience.

"Bullfric! why, yes it was Bully Bullfric. Let me see, he lived here in the year—"

"Look to my horse," shouted Wat in his ear, "and tell me which way he went."

"Who? your horse?"

"Idiot, no! Bullfric."

"Oh, Bullfric; why let me see, he went up stairs—I think he went up stairs—indeed, I'm sure he went up stairs; but if you'll wait a little while, I'll go and see for you, and then you'll know for certain if he did go up stairs, and whether he is up stairs."

But Wat was gone; the old man just caught a glimpse of him bounding up the stairs, and, with a shrug of surprise, he went and stationed himself at the horse's head.

Wat, encased in his full suit of mail, was unable to use the speed or precaution he could have done had he been less encumbered; still, he did not permit it to make a difference of much import. He, fortunately, knew well the intricacies of the corridors and winding passages leading to the suit of apartments appropriated to the use of Jacob Von Artaveld's own family, and he wound through them at a speed which seemed to set the obstacles his accoutrements presented at defiance. He was not long in gaining the room in which he knew Jacob Von Artaveld's dying child lay, and was struck with consternation on beholding the door open, and a female attendant lying dead across the threshold, the blood pouring from a ghastly wound in her side: upon a couch lay the brewer's daughter, senseless, a chair was thrown down, and several things strewed in confusion upon the floor.

Wat stood aghast; here, indeed, was fatal evidence that the villain had been there; but where was Rubacelle? there was no sign of her presence, no sound that she was near, nought but the most frightful indications that the ruffian had made her his prey. Wat's heart sickened, and he clenched his teeth and hands in bitterest indignation; he knew not how to act, what to do, where to go, that he might yet rescue her from the clutches of such a monster. Suddenly, he heard the heavy sound of retreating footsteps—those of a man—he listened intensely—he was not deceived: he clutched his sword and darted off in pursuit; before him was an open door leading to an inner room, through which he passed with the speed of lightning; it was joined by an ante-chamber which, in its turn, communicated with a corridor, along which he hastened and reached a flight of stairs.

The sound of the footsteps, still in his ears, came from below; he went down a portion, two and three at a time, and leaped the rest; again he arrived at a corridor containing passages leading various ways, as though the architect had conceived that the principle of a labyrinth was the only true and proper plan upon which to construct the galleries, passages, and corridors, communicating with the various apartments.

For a moment Wat was at fault, but applying his ear to the ground, he again heard the footsteps, and followed on to find, in the rapidity of his progress, that his ears had not deceived him, and that he was, as well, gaining upon them fast. Once more he reached a flight of stairs—he descended them for some distance at a rate which bid fair to result in broken limbs to

any one except he was under the especial protection of Providence.

The stairs, or rather stone steps, grew narrower and darker; he discovered he was approaching the subterraneous passages beneath the building; he knew not an instant was to be lost, for he could not tell what doors or impediments might be thrown in his path to impede his progress, unless he speedily overtook the flying villain; so, although he was overcome with heat, and out of breath by his exertions, he strove to increase his speed, and, to his great joy, heard the footsteps more audible than ever—a proof that he was gaing upon the chase; he heard, too, once or twice a stifled sob or shriek, and it incited him to redouble his swiftness, for he was now satisfied he was on the right track.

The only chance of impediment which now came before him was, that the way had been growing narrower and darker, and had at length become totally dark; he, however, stopped not, shrewdly surmising, that if the pursued could keep on at his pace, there was nothing to prevent the pursuer; he, therefore, took only the precaution to keep one hand to the wall, and the other holding his sword before him, and held on his way unchecked, until he reached the bottom of the stairs. They were terminated by a passage, which he pursued, and presently he heard the loud bang of a door, seemingly but a short distance before him, closed to with great violence. He instantly feared it would be a bar to his progress, but he diminished his pace nothing, and soon arrived at it; he threw himself forciby against it, and it flew open with such rapidity as nearly to cause him a tremendous fall; he with some difficulty recovered himself, kept on, and was stopped by another door, which, however, yielded to his touch, and he found that he was in a spacious vault, lighted by several windows, studded with pillars, and having a roof of a series of pointed arches of Anglo-Saxon architecture; but, what was by far the best discovery, he saw Bullfric flying along, bearing Rubacelle upon his shoulder.

She was struggling dreadfully, and, having succeeded in freeing her head from a mantle with which he had blindfolded and gagged her, gave utterance to several piercing shrieks. Wat shouted an exclamation of vengeance, and rushed after him, while Bullfric kept on and made desperate exertions to reach the cell in which he had resolved to confine the maiden. They wound among the pillars and intricacies for some distance, Wat going three steps to his one; but just as he was overtaking him, almost sure he had him in his grasp, the villain gained the cell and darted into it, and Wat heard the massive bolt of the lock shoot into the box, and immediately afterwards the loud insulting laugh of triumph from Bullfric.

Wat dashed himself against the door in a state of frenzy, but it remained immoveable, and then he was roused almost to madness by hearing the shrieks and struggles of Rubacelle; he heard her passionate appeals for mercy and her agonised screams for help; he was frantic, and dashed with his foot at the door with all the impetuosity and strength he was capable of; her shrieks redoubled, and, maddened by excitement and despair, he tried every effort human nature could put forth, but in vain; the door was firm as a rock, he fancied he heard her shrieks grow fainter, he looked round him wildly and groaned a prayer for assistance; at that moment his eye lighted upon one of the huge stones forming the massive pillars which supported the roof, damp and age seemed to have loosened the cement which united it with the others, he sprang at it, passed his sword round it found the mortar crumble to dust, he pulled at the stone—it appeared too heavy to move. Again he heard the shrieks of Rubacelle, as if she had gained fresh strength, and in his agony he prayed to God to grant him power to drag it from its place. He tried again—it yielded—he pulled madly—it slid out to his feet; it was of ponderous size, and seemed larger and heavier than it was possible for one man to raise: but what will not the desperation of despair produce! He seemed gifted by supernatural strength; he lifted, raised it, and, with an exertion which possibly could never be exercised again, even under the same circumstances, hurled it with such tremendous force against the door, close by the lock, that it tore it open, smashing and shivering the wood-work to splinters, and sending the door flying open. He shrieked his delight as he bounded in; in another second Rubacelle was torn from the grasp of Bullfric, and the villain himself sent reeling to the earth, felled by a furious blow from Wat.

Rubacelle recognised Wat at a glance: she wrung his hand, and tried to utter words of thanks, but became so hysterical, that she was unable, and she could only sink powerless and swooning into his arms. Bullfric having recovered his feet, made hastily and fiercely at Wat—again to be thrust back with such force, that he fell before he could a second time gain his feet. He held him with a grip of iron, seized him with the other hand by the throat, and a desperate struggle ensued, in which Bullfric, by immense exertions, contrived to break away.

Wat was unarmed; in lifting the stone to hurl at the door, he had laid down his sword, and happened to be without his anelas, but as Bullfric was only armed with his dagger, he did not heed his being without a weapon. Bullfric looked upon it though as an advantage, and rushed again like a tiger at our hero, flourishing his weapon; but with all his dexterity he was again caught by the wrist and throat by Wat, and was squeezed with such crushing energy in both places, that he dropped his anelas, and his eyes appeared starting out of their sockets. It was not Wat's intention to throttle him, but to give him up to justice, with the satisfaction of knowing that he would have half an hour's grace, and then swing from as tall a gallows as could be erected in the time. He therefore said,—

"Thou thrice-dyed villain! but that I would not stain my hands with the blood of so base a caitiff as thou, thou shouldst not live another minute: I would not rob the gibbet of such a graceless, heartless ruffian, otherwise, ere now thou hadst breathed thy last; however, an' thou dost struggle and attempt to get from me, I will not give thee a minute, but with thine own weapon will give to Satan the prey so justly his own."

Bullfric made an attempt to utter some words, but Wat's grip of his throat was too tight to enable him to speak distinctly, and as the compression was increased every effort he made to rid himself of it, he found it the best policy for him to remain still. Wat then removed his hand from his wrist, and unfastened his belt, which, when he had disengaged, he turned to Rubacelle, and perceiving that she had not fainted, requested her to assist him in passing the belt round Bullfric's arms—with which, oppressed by fear and trembling, she complied; the end being passed through the buckle, Wat drew it tight, not without some resistance on the part of Bullfric, but his throat was so firmly grasped in Wat's mailed hand with such choking vigour, that the pain rendered him powerless; and Wat, whose blood was still boiling with excitement, could scarcely keep himself from

squeezing the breath out of his body, and flinging his dead carcase to the earth as he would the vilest carrion.

When he had got his arms fast he loosened his hold of his windpipe, and like lightning tightened the belt until Bullfric's elbows nearly met behind, and he roared out with pain, but he did not speak a word; he contracted his brows until they covered his eyelids, and clenched his teeth hard, looking as sullen and dogged as vicious hound, and, although Wat put several questions to him, preserved the most morose and obstinate silence. Wat was not much affected by it—and with Rubacelle (shaking like an aspen from the effects of the alarming situation from which she had been just rescued) leaning upon his arm, and having a firm hold of the belt confining Bullfric, he proceeded to return to the upper part of the building. They retraced their steps through the vaults, winding among the massive pillars, and passing through the door into the dark passage, along which they proceeded cautiously until they reached the door, which Wat, believing fast, had dashed open, and nearly met with a heavy fall—it was fast. Wat groped about for a lock or bolt which might have slipped into the catch when the door rebounded back with the violence with which it had struck the wall, but he could not find the slightest indication of a fastening, although he searched everywhere for one; he shook and rattled at the door, but without stirring it or finding where it was fastened. At length he turned to Bullfric, and said—

"Know you by what means this door may be unclosed?"

He was answered by a taunting laugh.

"Villain!" he continued, on finding that Bullfric did not speak, "do not believe that, because this door, by some strange accident, is closed against me, that I shall not find other means of getting from here, or that it will benefit your positon."

"There's no other outlet," said Bullfric, with a jeer: "there's not an inch of this place I am unacquainted with; it is the only communication with the upper part."

"No matter; the same means that gained me access to your cell, will make me a way through this outlet."

"It will not; this door is solid iron. Any such attempt will only make matters worse; every blow will render the door still more secure."

"In what way does it fasten?"

"But that your disappointment, your horror, will afford me the most intense satisfaction, I would not tell you. It is a spring lock, one which can only be opened in a certain fashion, the secret of which is unknown to any one besides myself and another, who is far from here."

"You speak falsely: it is impossible that such a secret should be unknown to those who are in the habit of visiting these vaults."

"It is true, nevertheless, because its existence is unknown. The common fastenings are upon the other side, and those are of course known, and may have been used recently, for aught I know or care; but the spring has not, for I myself secured it before I quitted here, two or three years since, and when I set it yesterday I found it had not been touched."

"Then you aver there are no means of escape?"

"None whatever."

"Do you possess no means of opening it?"

"Not any: there are none but what are on the other side."

"If you speak truth, what made you run the hazard of its being fastened, when you flung it too while I was pursuing you?"

"Because I knew if it closed I should keep you away—I should have plenty of time to do what I purposed with the maiden; and I ran the chance of escaping, by guessing that you would not suffer her to be buried here alive—would remain, and when I thought proper, I could teach you how to unfasten it."

"You were a fool, as well as an unparalleled villain. If you had done as you surmised, the moment I had seen you I would have cut you to pieces!"

"I know better; I should have hid the girl where you could never have found her, and purchased my safety by producing her, though," added Bullfric, with a brutal laugh, "not quite worth so much as when I took her away."

"By heaven!" sneered Wat, "another such remark shall cost you you life, you heartless ruffian!"

"Pshaw!" roared Bullfric; "what matters it to me? My life is bespoken, and yours, and hers, for we must perish here; no one can aid us—at least I will take care they do not, for I will not divulge the secret."

"You will not?"

"No; I must perish, any way. If I escape death here, Jacob Von Arteveld will take my life for slaying his daughter's maid, and frightening the little life there was in his daughter out of her; and if I escape him, Sir Walter will not fail to string me up for what he will consider disgracing his troop. My life is forfeit, but I will choose the death that shall bring revenge with it. You must both die with me—starve to death! There is no hope for ye—none whatever. I am tough, and shall last the longest, for I have been used to privation and long fasting; I shall glut my eyes upon you as you waste away and grow weaker, and expend your breath in vain calls for help. I shall feast on your agonies, I shall laugh at your dying words and shrieks, I shall gloat —"

"Peace, wretch!" cried Wat, fiercely, "or I will give you the opportunity for no such devilish feelings, by burying my dagger in your breast —"

"And have my dead body as a ghastly companion in your imprisonment?"

"No such consideration would prevent me; I would drag your carcase where it would neither offend the sight nor be near me."

"And give up all hope beside, that I might relent even at the eleventh hour, and save you?"

"Aye! certain death would be better than in listening to your bitter mockery."

"And yet you will find it hard to die so young There may be in England those—"

"Fiend!" cried Wat, springing on him passionately.

"Hold! hold, for mercy's sake!" shrieked Rubacelle, clinging to Wat. "Heed him not, heed him not; let there be no blood shed. If we must perish, let if not be with the blood of him, wicked as he is, wet upon your hands."

Wat restrained his rage at her intercession, but he resolved not to endure the bitterness of this cold-blooded villain any longer, and seized him by the belt. He requested Rubacelle to follow him, and then returned to the cell in which he had rescued her. He then bound Bullfric hand and foot, for he had no power to resist, being so firmly fastened above the elbows; his hands were tied behind him, and he was forced upon the ground in the farthest corner, and there, in a sitting position, fastened to a large ring which was fixed in the wall. When Wat had completed his work, he said bitterly,—

"Thus, thou immeasurable villain! will I prevent thee indulging in thy infernal malice. If we must

perish, it shall not be with thy brutal scoffs in our ears, or thy fiendish eyes to glare upon our departing agony. Here shall you remain ALONE until we are rescued, or thy death takes place; and you, who best know what resources you have within you to sustain your fortitude as famine consumes you, will know how to thank your own villany for the terrible situation in which it has placed you. If you are not wholly abandoned to wickedness, offer up to God your most earnest prayers for mercy hereafter, and speedy death here—for you, at least, there is no hope of escape."

Wat took Rubacelle by the hand, and led her from the place. As he passed through the doorway, Bullfric suddenly cried out, in an altered tone,—

"Stay! Come back!"

"Not if you held in your hand the means of our deliverance, and swore to employ it to save us!" returned Wat, closing the door after him as he crossed the threshold, without heeding the yells which Bullfric poured out for him to return. When they had quitted the cell a few paces, Rubacelle, who clung to Wat as if she expected some fresh attack, from which he only could protect her, said to him, in a tone of anxiety,—

"That dreadful man could not have spoken the truth; there is surely some way of escaping from these dreary vaults?"

"I hope so, and think so, but fear we shall be unable to discover it," replied Wat. "It shall not, however, be for want of a trial. Come, if your fright has not robbed you of all your strength, we will search the place minutely, but if you feel fatigued, seat yourself upon the base of one of these pillars, and I will prosecute my scrutiny alone. If I should be so fortunate as to find an outlet, believe me, I will not be long in making you acquainted with it, or in making use of it."

"Oh, no, I could not stay alone—I will go with you. I am not tired—indeed, I am not; you shall see that I can very well endure considerable fatigue."

"Yet you look pale and weary."

"But I am not. You must not leave me alone; I should die with fright."

"Nay, you are not such a coward; beside, there is nothing now to harm you."

"I am no coward when near you, but if I were alone, I should conjure up such frightful things, my brain would turn. Oh, do not leave me! indeed, I shall not be tired, nor frightened, nor anything but pleased when near you." Rubacelle uttered these last words in such a tone of fullness of heart, and pressed his arm, and looked up with such swimming eyes and earnest manner, that had Wat been as observant respecting himself as of others, he would have surmised that there was something more than mere gratitude dictating the words and action. He, however, thought no more of it than as a kind remembrance on her part of what he had done, and so, smiling, said,—

"Well, if it gives you pleasure, you shall be near me. Come, we will together look for means of deliverance; and if we cannot find them, we will sit down together and patiently await—"

"Death!" uttered Rubacelle, mournfully.

"No!" replied Wat, pressing her hand as he saw her head droop. "Not so bad as that; we shall surely be missed—my friend, Michael, is aware that I went in pursuit of Bullfric, and I am sure will not rest until he has found us out; he may be many hours before he conceives the idea that we may be here; but I know his perseverance, and his affection for me, will make him persist in his search until this place, among others, has been explored."

"I hope it will be the first place he thinks of," ejaculated Rubacelle.

"And I," answered Wat; "but I doubt it; we shall not perhaps need his aid—let us make a search at once."

"Those windows perhaps may afford us means of escape?"

"There is no chance of that. In the first place, it would be impossible to reach them without assistance, which we have not got; and, secondly, I can see the aperture is too small for either you or I to squeeze through if even we could reach them—there is no hope that way, but there may be some opening, natheless you villain's asseveration to the contrary. Come, cheer up, we must not give way to despair until all hope has left us, and it must be some time before that takes place; we shall escape, never fear—although it may be a dreary time ere we do, yet we shall escape, or for the first time my presentiments will fail me."

"I sincerely trust we may; it is not so much for myself that I feel despondent, but for you—you who have already incurred so much harm for my sake, and who now, to save me from a terrible fate, have been shut in this lonely place, with but a frail possibility of getting free, or of being rescued ere death overtakes you."

"Nay, maiden, think not of that—I have done naught for you I would not have done for any one in your strait."

"I believe it," she uttered, enthusiastically.

"And for the hazard, 'tis not worth a thought. I am a soldier, and incur the daily risk of embracing death in many shapes, therefore let no such consideration have any weight with you; our lives are in the keeping of our Maker, and we shall not perish unless He has so ordained it—if He has, nothing we can do will avert it. In any case, despondency or sadness will avail us naught, so let us cheerfully prosecute our search, and see what Providence has in store for us."

"If I thought that you would bear our situation more lightly by my smiling and talking cheerfully, or that it would add one small degree to your sanguine expectations of escape, I would most gladly obey you—you should not know by my countenance but that I was walking in some pleasant place, and was very, very happy."

"It will certainly take something off the care and regret I must feel, to know your painful situation in being imprisoned thus."

"Then will I look glad and contented, nor breathe one mournful sigh to make you think otherwise; and we will search together with hopeful and cheerful hearts, trusting in the goodness of the Almighty to save us from the dreadful fate of perishing here; but if it be His will that no aid shall reach us, why we will e'en die together as a—a—" She hesitated, but Wat said nothing, and seemingly making an effort to conquer a strong emotion, she looked up with a full, earnest, tender gaze, and faltered,—

"An affectionate brother and sister."

"Even so," replied Wat, quietly. He pressed her hand as he spoke, but Rubacelle felt a pang of disappointment pass through her heart to find that he said no more.

Once more Wat sought the door which had denied them egress, and exhausted his invention in devising means to open it, without success—it remained immoveable. He sought over every inch, with the hope to find the spring that commanded it, but in vain.

He returned for the stone which he had dashed open the cell door with, and when he arrived at it, Bullfric heard his footsteps, and called out to him; he heeded him not, but endeavoured to lift the stone, but to his surprise found he could scarcely move it. Again Bullfric shouted to him, but he returned no answer, still essaying with all his strength to raise the block of stone. Bullfric heard his efforts.

"Aha!" he roared, "you may take the stone block an' you will, and dash it against the door if you can, but I tell you as I told you before, the heavier your blows, the firmer you will fasten yourself in, so that those without cannot help you if they would; try it, and when you are worn out with fatigue and despair, you will remember my words."

Wat made no reply, but strove still harder to get the stone into his arms, wondering how he had before raised it even high in the air, when now he was unable to lift it an inch from the ground, but he forgot that the madness of his desperation lent him a strength which in cooler moments he might despair of being able to employ. Rubacelle, who saw his exertions, wanted with her delicate gentle hands to assist—and if willingness to share his toil and labour had been all that was required to raise the massive block, he would, with her aid, have borne it as though it had been a feather: he would not, however, permit her to touch it, and commenced rolling it forward. Bullfric persisted in calling to him, although he was unheeded.

"You are but ensuring your doom," he cried; "besides there is another way besides the iron door to escape?"

"Heaven be praised!" cried Rubacelle, eagerly; and forgetting everything but the hope of escape, inquired, "where is it?"

"I am not quite such a fool as to tell, without making good terms for myself," returned he.

"Then keep your secret," exclaimed Wat; "your fate is sealed, there is no release for you but death."

"Nor you," cried Bullfric, with a sneering laugh.

"We shall see," returned Wat; "the hint that there is an outlet besides that door is enough for me—I'll find it out."

"You cannot! even I, who know every inch of the ground, and know all about it, would have difficulty to discover it—I'm sure, therefore, you won't. You'd better come to my terms—set me free, and hold me scatheless for what I have done, and then I'll warrant to get you from here."

"I would perish rather," returned Wat with stern determination.

"And see the maiden, too, starve and die by inches for your obstinacy?"

"Think not of me," cried Rubacelle eagerly, as she saw the rapid change that passed over Wat's features at his words; "do only as you would were I not near."

"Fear not," replied Wat, "I can save you without his aid, I trust; but if not, it would be better that your freedom were purchased even at that villain's safety than you should perish."

"I am not afraid to die," said Rubacelle, "and would rather do so than you should compromise your word or forego any just determination you might form, and regret hereafter it had not been fulfilled!"

"Your safety is a far greater consideration than any determination of mine," rejoined Wat. "We will, however, try everything we can first, and if all our efforts fail, then I will apply to him."

"And then it will be too late," cried Bullfric. "If you do not at once agree, my lips shall be closed as firmly as though death had sealed them."

"The fear of death will open them," said Wat, scornfully.

"Not though I were at the last gasp," exclaimed Bullfric. "I could see famine eating your cheeks to the bone—make your eyes ready to start out of your head—could see you fall upon your knees in abject misery—hear your frantic prayers for mercy, and though I knew a word would save you and myself, too, I would die without uttering it. I can be as firm as you, and care for death as little as you do. I would not advise you to try me, but come to my terms at once."

Wat made him no reply, but making a tremendous exertion got the stone into his arms, and, tottering beneath its ponderous weight, made towards the iron door, followed by Rubacelle. Bullfric heard him depart, and uttering the most frightful oaths, vowed that nothing should now make him disclose the secret of the outlet; he yelled forth shouts of derision, of scorn, and defiance, and ended in cries of despair. Wat paid no attention to them, but persevered in endeavouring to break in the door, but uselessly. The stone was far too large to be employed with facility; and required greater strength than he or any human being possessed to cast effectually at the door; therefore, after several futile attempts, he was obliged to give up all hopes of succeeding that way. Then did he and Rubacelle search the whole range of vaults and passages with the closest scrutiny, but without discovering the outlet of which Bullfric had spoken, and night came on while they were yet searching, and then they returned to the largest vault of the range, and seated themselves upon the stone sill of the door leading to the passage through which they were debarred egress, and for a time they were both silent and sad; but Wat roused himself and tried to cheer Rubacelle by telling her that the morning would bring them help he was sure, and bade her not fear although they were in that dark dull place alone, and she, who could not be impercipient of his kind motive, or of what he had undergone and incurred in her behalf, strove hard to repay him by appearing cheerful and contented, and full of hope that the morrow would bring them freedom, and said many things smilingly, and, as it appeared, happily, in order to cheer him and keep him from thinking that her heart was sinking with horror and apprehension at being there; and as the night advanced she grew heavy and tired, and full of sleep, and at last laid her head upon his breast and slumbered as gently and sweetly as though she had naught to raise one sad misgiving in her mind.

Wat watched the long night through, if not with melancholy forebodings of being buried there alive, at least with thoughts which were oppressed by the nature of his situation. His thoughts recurred to Violet, and, despite of all he could do to the contrary, they were filled with strange presentiments of evil to her, and misery to himself. He endeavoured to laugh them impatiently away, as the consequence of his unpleasant predicament, and tried to think of other things, but they would return and settle themselves like evil spirits upon him. Two or three times during the night he heard Bullfric's shouts, but they did not waken Rubacelle, and he heeded them no further; and then the grey of morning began to appear, and he bent his ear to listen intently whether he could not hear efforts being made to discover him, but there was no sound conveying any such blissful intelligence; and then Rubacelle awoke, cold and shivering, and stared wildly round her for some little time ere she could remember where she was, or how she came there, but the sight of Wat, looking pale and haggard with his fatigue and sleepless night in the cold morn

ing light, soon restored her to her recollection—one that was very sad. She took both his hands, and would would have said something to him, but that her heart was too full, and she could only hang her head to conceal her tears. Wat, however, smiled and spoke cheeringly, and again they essayed to discover some outlet, looking with the most vigilant investigation at every place where a secret door or outlet of any description was likely to exist, and even in those places where such a thing seemed improbable, but always with the sickening certainty that they searched in vain.

They returned frequently to the iron door, to listen if there was any search being made for them, and staid there nearly an hour each time; but no, all was silent and still—the very absence of sound seeming a bugbear to frighten hope away. Night again drew near; Wat felt faint for want of sustenance, but said nothing, although Rubacelle several times referred to it; and she would have made no complaint to have saved herself from death, for fear he should have his sufferings (and she knew by her own feelings that he must be enduring many pangs he would not display) added to by any lamentations or murmurings on her part.

When the shades of evening were making the pillars and forms indistinct, and there seemed to be but little hope left that they would be discovered, Wat thought it would be better to go to Bullfric and accede to his terms, but Rubacelle said she hoped that help would soon arrive—it could not now be far distant, and would not on her account suffer him to compromise his sense of justice; as he was resolved to wait a much longer time on his own, he did n go, but when night enshrouded them once more in darkness, they returned to the door sill and seated themselves, and Wat endeavoured to beguile the time by relating tales and repeating such things as would keep Rubacelle from sinking into despair, until, quite worn out with fatigue, they both dropped into a deep slumber.

Wat was the first to awake, and found that the sun had risen considerably, for the place was quite light. Rubacelle's head still rested on his breast, and she still slept; he looked upon her face, which was wan, and began to show indications of a want of nourishment, in the sunken eyes and pallid cheeks. His heart smote him, for he thought it might be his terrible lot to see those indications fearfully increase, and be unable to do aught to remove them; he fancied she looked like Violet as she slept—her face was very fair and her features very beautiful; there was the same contour, the same coloured hair, the same formed eyelids; the more he gazed, the stronger he fancied the resemblance, and upon the impulse of the moment he bent over her and very gently kissed her forehead; she opened her eyes slowly as he did so, and smiled sweetly, while he felt the warm blood rush up into his face. He, however, made no allusion to it, nor did she; but after a short embarrassing silence, he questioned her whether she did not feel feeble and faint, and she did not deny that such was the case, but rejoined, if such was her feeling, what must be his? He would not acknowledge that he was much affected by his long abstinence; and, indeed, the keen sense of hunger which had so painfully oppressed him the previous day, had subsided into a faint, sick feeling, that brought more of feebleness with it than a desire to eat. Once more they prosecuted a search among the vaults and passages, with a hope that they might yet discover the outlet, only to be disappointed, and have hard struggles to dispel the gloomy anticipations which were seizing fast hold of them, in spite of their efforts to the contrary.

Again they visited the iron door, against wh Wat beat and shouted at the same time, until vaults rung with his voice, without having any re but the bitter mockery of the echo of his own voc

He could see that Rubacelle was growing p and paler, and could tell by the way in which clung to his arms that she was growing more fee every hour. The afternoon was approaching, still there was no sound or symptom of help being hand—their situation was becoming terrible; W felt that his strength was leaving him, and that was getting oppressed by a raging thirst; his mou and throat were dry and parched, and he could w difficulty force out his words.

He saw that Rubacelle was watching his coun nance earnestly and sadly, and surmised that face must bear likewise the long fast he had suffe impressed upon it as strongly as hers; and then thought if her life and his own could be spared, ev t the expense of the escape of such a villain Bullfric from the punishment which he so rich deserved, it would be better than that all shou perish, and no good gained. When he had come this determination, he said to Rubacelle—

"I will to Bullfric, and even at the expense obtaining him a free pardon, I will get from him means of escape; the hope, now, that we shall discovered is but a frail one, and it will be better that he should escape than you perish."

"Or you!" replied Rubacelle, fervently; "go him, he will be sure to tell you all you wish to kn and we shall yet be happy."

"You will not be alarmed to remain here until return?"

"May I not accompany you?"

"It is impossible to tell what change bad pass and a want of food may have made in his features would spare you the pain of such a sight."

"You are very thoughtful, and very, very kind; will be guided in all things by you. I will wait he if you wish it until your return."

Wat pressed her hand, and she seated herself up the sill, for she was growing weak and exhausted; hastened to the cell in which he had confined Bullfr he was not long in reaching it, and, as he anticipate the change in the ruffian was awful to behold; h face was white to ashyness—his hair was straggli over his eyes, which were like fiery balls ready start from their sockets—his cheek bones were fe fully sharp—his nose seemed pinched, and to protru much beyond its usual place—he appeared altogeth wild, haggard, and a ghastly victim of gaunt famin Wat was shocked at the sight, and started as h beheld him. Bullfric grinned as he entered, bu uttered no word, and Wat, conquering the strai repugnance he felt to interchange a word with hi said—

"You see me here; you guess the purport of m visit?"

Bullfric nodded, grinned, but did not speak.

"I have come to hear your terms by which e release is to be effected?"

Bullfric nodded, but said nothing.

"Name them, and if they are reasonable, I wi comply with them. What are they?"

"None!" roared Bullfric, in a voice frightfull hollow.

"What mean you?" asked Wat, sternly.

"What I say. I will offer no terms," he continued with a chuckle of delight; "you must starve—bot of you must starve. Ho! ho! I can see your wh and sunken cheeks—I see your eyes almost burn beneath your cheek-bones—hear your hollow voic

and I know you are being devoured by raging hunger —ha! ha! ha!—and thirst—and thirst—ha! ha! ha!—as I am—as I am; and you think I'll let you escape when you find you can manage no other way. No, no! I'll be revenged; you have thwarted me twice—twice, you young hound—each time in the moment of success. But I'll be revenged for both; I must die, but I don't care for that—my worst pangs are over, yours are to come—ho! ho!—I shall last you both out yet, I know. Ha! ha! I

shall gloat over the knowledge that you are both wasting inch by inch—you can't last above four and twenty hours longer—ha! ha!—I can—I—"

"Peace, villain!" cried Wat, in a tone that instantly stopped him short; "you are mad."

"I may be—I may be," retorted Bullfric; "but I'll have my revenge."

"You will not, on any terms, assist to set us free from this place?"

"No!"

"Not if life and free pardon were offered thee?"

"No!"

"Nor a large sum proffered to boot?"

"Not to be made an emperor!"

"Wretch! of what good can the death of the maiden be to thee?"

"The same as yours—it brings me revenge. She hates me, and, doubtless, likes you; if she won't be mine, she shan't be thine, not though you have—"

"Hell-hound, forbear! does not the prospect of a speedy death deter thee from uttering such infernal malignity?"

"No! I shall give up my last gasp with delight, for then I shall know you are both stretched upon the stone flags beyond all help—dead or lingering, and praying—if you are one of the fools who think prayers can help—to die, without the strength to raise a finger, or power to utter a sound, and writhing in the agony which famine's iron fangs will tear you with—ha! ha!—I've felt it all, but I shall not suffer alone—I shall have rare company."

"Do you refuse to help us to escape?" fiercely interrupted Wat.

"I do, I do! I would not let—"

"Will you communicate to me, on consideration of being let free and paid handsomely, the secret of the outlet?"

"No! I'll have the sweet revenge of making you starve to death," he roared.

Wat rushed from the place to save himself from slaying the wretch; he had with difficulty commanded his temper during the colloquy—his case was desperate, and the bitter scoffs of Bullfric seemed like pouring oil on fire; he felt that had he remained another second he should have sprung upon him and at a blow accomplished the death that by slow but sure degrees was stealing over him. Rubacelle saw Wat advancing rapidly towards her, and augured well of it, hope prognosticating that there could be no haste but that which good news had created, and she rose from her seat, and stretched out her hands towards him, smiling faintly, yet joyously, and saying feebly—

"He will set us free, will he not?—ah, I was sure his heart could not be so hard that he would let you perish; he has been very wicked, but not so bad as that! and shall we go now directly, and shall we be sure to get free?—ah, you hang your head mournfully—he does not refuse, he cannot refuse; oh, merciful Heaven! speak to me—look not so very, very sad, he will set us free!"

"He is a wretch without parallel," replied Wat; "let us not talk of him."

"Oh God, have mercy upon us! is there no hope?"

"While we have life let us not despair; there is hope even at the eleventh hour, that we may be saved. You must be sure the search for us is made as anxiously as we look for its discovery of us, and while there is a chance of finding us I know there are those without who will not cease their efforts. But if the worst should come to the worst, and it should be the will of the Almighty that we die here, let us meet our fate patiently and resignedly—the bitterest tears, the loudest lamentations, the shrieks of despair and hopelessness, will not assist in releasing us, but, on the contrary, add to the horror of our situation; so let us bear this dispensation calmly, and, if not cheerfully, at least unafflictedly; let us look the danger in the face, and it will have little or no terror for us."

"And so I would, if I only were to suffer; but indeed, I am very miserable to think I should have been the cause of death—a death so dreadful, to you—you who—"

"I know you would not wish to pain me, Rubacelle," interrupted Wat, in gentle tones; "but if you speak thus you will, and that considerably. Come, let us look again for this hidden outlet—of which Bullfric has the secret, though I am somewhat inclined to think it nowhere exists—it will pass the dreary time away if we are not successful. Come, lean on me—there: all will yet be well—God will not desert us, I feel he will not—we will walk very gently, and rest now and then as we proceed; so, cheerly—that is well."

And using such kind words, though uttered in a low hollow voice, Wat led Rubacelle along; she was very feeble, and tottered on, scarcely able to support herself. Wat himself had but little more strength; he felt dizzy and light-headed; several times during their slow progress the place seemed to whirl round with him, and he staggered as if he must fall; but stretching out his hands to any pillar that was near, he saved himself, and after a moment's rest proceeded, trying hard to say things to comfort Rubacelle, who was so weak and powerless, that she had not the power to prevent the tears which fell profusely down her pallid wasted cheeks, although she would have given worlds to have done so, in order that Wat might not see them. They wandered about, and as well as their feeble limbs would permit them, visited every place they had before scrutinized, only to be subjected to the sick depression of the heart utter ill success creates. They got back to their old resting-place, fatigued dreadfully by their exertions, and seated themselves silently upon the stone step. Wat felt that if his burning thirst was not allayed he must go mad—horrid imaginings rose up, and though he tried strenuously to drive them from him, they would throng and crowd into his brain; he felt a horrible impulse seize him to rave and tear and act frantically, yet possessed the knowledge that to indulge in it would be mere madness, and, in a fit of desperation, he resolved to pay Bullfric another visit, to endeavour to get from him, by any means, he cared not what, some clue to the outlet, and he turned to Rubacelle to tell her what he proposed doing, but found her leaning back in a sleep, like unto a death-swoon. He shuddered to look on the ravages famine, in three short days, had made, and could have wept in very despair, that one so young and fair should be doomed to such a dreadful fate; he would not disturb her, and tottered feebly to Bullfric's cell, reeling like a drunken man from utter weakness. As he reached the door, he heard a moaning and it seemed like an ineffectual effort to pronounce his name. He made an effort to hasten his steps, and entered. He shuddered to see the horrible state the wretched man was in: he was foaming at the mouth—his eyes were protruding fearfully, and his jaws were working in vain efforts to make himself heard. He uttered a cry of joy as his eyes encountered Wat, and articulated, so feebly that he could scarce make himself understood,—

"Water water!"

"I have none!" replied Wat, ;hoarsely, the thirst he was himself enduring receiving an impetus at the very name; "I have none, would to God I had!"

Bullfric nodded with his head to a particular part of the cell, and repeated his cry—

"Water water!"

Wat followed his eyes as they seemed to light on a certain part of the wall, but could see nothing, while Bullfric made terrible exertions to speak loud enough to be heard. Wat drew nearer to him, and bent his ear close to his mouth, and just caught the words—

"A spring! press it hard—food—and—water!" and Bullfric sunk back exhausted.

Wat needed no inducements to try and discover the spring, and darted upon the wall as a miser would upon a treasure he had unexpectedly discovered. He passed his hand tremblingly over it, found a small knob, which he pressed, and perceived a plate of iron, covered with a coat of lime and sand, so as to represent stone, move, but it moved with difficulty, or, rather, Wat was deficient of strength to move it more than two inches. He peered in—he could see that there were loaves and vessels; the sight lent him new strength—he tried again, but it would not stir; he tried to force his hand in, but, thin as it was, he could not succeed. To have food and water close to him, and be unable to obtain it, was maddening. He placed his hand again upon the knob, and gave a sudden desperate dash against it, and the slide flew back, laying bare a small stock of bread and one vessel containing wine, but there was no water.

The frightful state of thirst to which Wat had been brought, made him as avaricious of his new-found treasure, as the greatest miser could be of his gold. He hugged the wine-pitcher in his arms, and to his eyes it seemed to contain not even enough for himself; but he remembered Rubacelle, and felt the greediness—the offspring of utter destitution—counsel him that there would not, when she had drank as well as himself, be any to spare for Bullfric; and, ungenerous as was the act, he was about to leave him and hasten to the maiden, without giving him a drop, when Bullfric again motioned Wat towards him. He approached, and Bullfric whispered,—

"Count the fourth flag from the door—press a spring you will find there—it is a well—bring me water—water—oh, God!—I am on fire—on fire—quick—water! water!"

Wat set down his pitcher of wine at a distance from Bullfric, and did as required, and again experienced much difficulty in making the spring, which he easily found, act, from want of strength, but he did eventually, and a door flew up—beneath was a well of clear water. The sight was Elysium to him; he knelt down, and tried to reach it with his mouth, but the water was too low down, fortunately, or, acting upon the impulse, he would have drank so inordinately, that it would have been certain death to him. He regained his feet on finding himself unable to obtain it without a vessel, and he hastened back to the recess in which he had found the wine; there were several vessels—he took one, dipped it in, filled it, and drank it off at a draught. When did wine ever taste so delicious as that draught of water? He refilled it, and was again about to drink, when he thought of Rubacelle and of Bullfric; he carried the water to Bullfric, and held it for him while he quaffed it, in such eagerness that he was nearly choked in swallowing it: once or twice Wat would have removed it, but he held it with his teeth most tenaciously until the last drop had been drunk, and then he would barely suffer it to leave his lips; when he did, he cried out,—

"More, more!—give me more!"

Wat nodded his head, but did not speak. He took up one of the loaves and the pitcher of wine, and then, proceeding to the well, refilled the empty vessel with water, and hastened to Rubacelle. He found her in nearly the same lethargic state as when he left her; she had no power to speak, but her dim eyes opened wider as he drew near, and she tried to smile, but the effort was almost a vain one. He knelt down before her, and, dipping his fingers in the water, bathed her temples and her mouth with it; it revived her considerably; then he made her drink some wine, and broke the loaf into very small pieces and made her eat, though she would touch neither until he had first partaken of both; and when they had eaten as much as was necessary, Wat returned to Bullfric, bearing to him some bread and some more water, at the same time repeating to him his offer of pardon if he would tell him where the outlet was situated.

"Unbind me," murmured Bullfric;" "give my hands liberty, and I will."

Wat did so; and as soon as his hands were free, he seized some bread which was near, and began devouring with avidity, talking at the same time, though so hoarsely as to be barely distinct."

"The outlet leads to the river side," he said; "I knew you could not find it, for you never once approached the place where it lies; it is —"

At this moment, some bread, which he was greedily swallowing, stopped in his throat; his contortions were frightful—his face grew black, he struggled fearfully, the veins in his forehead became like cords, his breast heaved convulsively. Wat shook him, but without being of any avail; his arms and hands, which were stretched forth, agonised, fell to his side, his head fell upon his shoulder, and he dropped into Wat's arms a hideous corpse.

Wat was horrified at this unexpected incident—he could scarcely credit his senses; he tried various means to restore animation, but without success; nature, exhausted by want of nourishment, had lost the power of producing a reaction, and required but a small force to consummate the death starvation had brought so near. Wat dashed water in his face, rubbed his throat, and indeed did everything he thought calculated to revive him, but in vain; his jaw had fallen, and the miserable man was dead!

With him departed the last hope Wat had clung to for escape. He felt satisfied that, after so long a time had elapsed without any one approaching the door which confined them in this dreary place, it would not now be searched by his friends, at least in time to save them; and Bullfric having died without giving him any clue to the spot where the outlet was situated, save that he had not approached it in his search, made him despair of being liberated. It was true that he had fortunately obtained provision and water calculated to last them some days yet, and in the interval they might be discovered, but the chance was now so slight that it was scarcely worth thinking of; yet, as the danger is never so imminent but there exists in the breast of those subjected to it some hope of escape, Wat resolved not to give up the idea that they might yet be saved, until he felt his last breath leaving his body. His spirits, natheless he strove bravely to keep them up, were very much oppressed; and as his thoughts recurred to her who held his undivided heart, he could have groaned in very anguish of spirit, to think that he had in all probability looked his last upon her.

It was not that he felt it difficult to die, but to die thus was most hard. He would not have felt it so deeply if he had been cut down in his first battle, so that he had died as became a brave soldier, that it might be said of him when he was dead that he had

perished manfully, and had done nobly, and that if Violet had to mourn his death, it might have carried with it the consolation that he had at least fallen covered with glory. But to perish here—to be buried alive in a gloomy vault, without its being known what became of him, without an explanation of the cause of his disappearance—for at best it could but be surmised, and the censorious world was as likely to assert that he had purposely and villanously carried off the maiden, he stood so great a chance of perishing in endeavouring to preserve, as it was to attribute it to a good motive—was enough to drive him almost distracted.

These and such thoughts would crowd upon him, and struggle almost successfully with the strong efforts he made to be cheerful, if it was only to keep Rubacelle from sinking to despair—and now the sudden death of Bullfric, at the very moment when he had anticipated possessing the means of escape, made him give way more than he had yet done to the crushing effects of hopeless despair, and for a short time he paced the cell in an agonised prostration of mind. The paroxysm would have its way, but when it in some degree subsided, his native strength of mind came to his aid, and he shook off the weakness, resolving to meet his fate calmly, and look the worst features of his position in the face with a smile, if it would tend to show the frame of mind with which he was determined to meet and grapple with his fate.

He returned to Rubacelle; she was still reclining upon the steps, and her attenuated form and emaciated features shewed how strongly the abstinence had affected her; but she had borne it very gently—had never complained—had never said one word that could make him believe she hungered or thirsted, or that she felt the bitterness of her situation more than for the evil to which it exposed him. She had watched him closely and earnestly; had smiled when he looked sad and thoughtful, though her heart was almost bursting at the time; had said such words and acted in such fashion, that he might not believe she endured half the misery and anguish she was really suffering, until the sheer exhaustion of nature had compelled her to sink powerless. But now that the food and wine she had received had refreshed her and restored her to life, though not to strength, she felt the same strong desire to appear so cheerful and resigned, that Wat might not have the pain he must naturally feel for his own situation added to by any display of grief on her part for her's; and so, when she saw him advancing, she smiled kindly and sweetly, and noted with pleasure that he looked more placid, more cheerful, than he had for some time previously. Her heart beat high to witness it, in the expectation that he was bringing good news, but she feared to ask, in case he might have to disappoint her, and she thought it better to stifle the desire to ask for the sake of sparing him the regret, believing, too, he would not keep her long in suspense if he had good news to communicate. He seated himself by her side, and taking her hand, said, kindly—

"You are better than you were?"

"Much, very much!" she replied, in a voice that weakness made feeble; "the wine and bread have made me feel quite strong again."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," said Wat; "I have some hopes now of discovering the outlet which shall lead us to liberty; but you are too enfeebled to accompany me, and—and therefore you will do better to remain here until I return with intelligence of my good or ill success," concluded Wat, hesitating as he spoke, because he did not wish to tell her of Bullfric's death, or that he intended to search the cell where he lay, in case she might ask any questions respecting him. Rubacelle assented, saying she would do anything he thought for the best; and with a charge to keep up her spirits during his absence, he departed to the cell. The first thing he did was to completely unbind the body of Bullfric, and lay it upon the paved floor. It was a ghastly spectacle, but his emergency was too great to heed it sufficiently to deter him keeping it company while he searched, even if hours transpired while he was prosecuting it; and he proceeded with his task most perseveringly, but to find nothing more than he had already discovered; there was not a square inch of the floor or of the wall, on every side within his reach, that had escaped his scrutiny, but without finding any secret opening or clue to it, and, wearied to exhaustion with his exertion, he was at last compelled to give it up as hopeless. He returned to Rubacelle, trying still that his countenance should not exhibit the despair that was settling firmly on his heart; and when he seated himself by her, it was with the air of one who, if he had not been very successful, was not dissatisfied with his labours. It deceived her, and she asked, quickly—

"Have you found it?"

"Not yet," he replied, gently; "but when the morning comes, I will look again, and I trust that with patience, perseverance, and a good heart, it will not be kept hidden much longer from my sight."

Rubacelle was silenced by this reply; robed as it was in a garment of hope, she could easily perceive that he had failed utterly, and if the pang which despair inflicts could have destroyed her, Wat would have been the only living being in that lonely place: so, though she was too weak to struggle with her feelings, she burst into tears, and Wat, whose spirits were low enough to have followed her example, kept down his bitterness, and said all he could to cheer her, holding out hopes of deliverance far too chimerical for himself to indulge in. As he pressed her hand, and her head sought his shoulder as a pillow, he felt a strong shiver run through her frame, making every muscle quiver and tremble like an aspen.

"You are trembling with cold," he said; "rest here a moment, and I will fetch something to cover you."

He rose up, and ran off to the cell in which Bullfric was lying; in one corner of it, during his search, he had discovered some bed covering, brought there by Bullfric before he had seized Rubacelle—the villain having made many preparations to receive her, which explained the presence of the wine and bread, and several other things Wat found that would tend to keep them alive some time longer. He quickly made himself master of the bedding, and brought it back to where Rubacelle was lying, and placed a portion of it on the ground by the side of the steps; he assisted her to seat herself upon it, and then covered her half over with the remainder—made her drink a copious draught of wine and eat of the bread, and then, as night drew on apace, he seated himself by her side, leaning his back against the steps, and, as before, making his breast a pillow for her head. It would have been an affecting sight to an observer to have seen how, without hope—each having the firm conviction that they must perish there—they tried to persuade each other into the belief that the morrow would certainly afford them relief; and that, though they were weak and faint, and only held a half relationship to life, they endeavoured to prove they were not much inconvenienced in being thus imprisoned.

There was not a thought or a word which might be

used to comfort and sustain them in this heavy trial which they did not employ; could a sentiment, a hope, an anticipation be enforced by a smile, it was given, even through tears; and could the kind hearts, the tender solicitude of two young beings for each other's safety have lightened their situation of all its danger, then would Rubacelle and Wat have had no reason to repine; they chatted and smiled, and made such pleasant converse, to have heard them would have made one believe that they were seated in some green shady place, with a blue sky over them, the fresh air round them, with nought near them to fear; and thus they talked, until the words died on their lips, and sleep released them from the hard necessity of uttering sentiments which their terrible situation rendered opposite and contrary to their real feelings.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Oh that the slave had forty thousand lives;
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge."

SHAKSPERE.

"At his heels
Behold the just avenger, swift to seize
His forfeit head, and thirsting for his blood.
* * * *
Panting, forlorn, he flies;
Through every hole he sneaks, through every jakes
Plunging he wades besmeared.
* * * *
He shakes his sides,
Slow rising from his lair, and stretches wide
His ravenous paws.
* * * *
Now, the greedy brute
Winds him from far, and leaping o'er the mound
To seize his trembling prey, headlong is plung'd
Into the deep abyss."

SOMERVILLE.

THE sun was shining brightly on the morning after Leon de la Agnelet was slain, when Gualtier appeared at the door of the turret bearing his body. Edric, who had watched anxiously during the night for his return, rushed forth as he perceived him approach, and relieved him from his lifeless burden, carrying it into one of the lower apartments. When he had laid it carefully upon a bed which stood there, he turned to Gualtier and said—

"Holy mother of God! Gualtier, how has this come to pass?"

"Through treachery. I told you as much ere I quitted you," he replied; "but, God help me, I was not in time to prevent it."

"Not in time!" echoed Edric, "and yet the night has passed away without you having even brought intelligence of this terrible disaster."

"Aye, and a weary night I have had; listen, Edric:—After I broke away from you, I soon overtook my master, and that cowardly remorseless villain that accompanied him; I dogged their steps until they reached the mound overlooking the forest; I followed them up it until they reached the top, and then I was obliged to steal round some distance to avoid being seen; I crouched into a thicket, I had great difficulty in forcing my way in, but I succeeded—would to heaven I had not!"

"Why?" demanded Edric, eagerly.

"You shall hear," replied Gualtier. "I saw them stand and measure swords; I watched their movements with the eye of a lynx. My master had far the best of the contest, and I remained quiet. They breathed each other, for they fought vigorously, and for a moment they rested; my master leaned with his back to a tree, and had no sooner placed his sword's point to the ground, when the cowardly, bloody-minded Martin du Bois sprung on him and buried his sword in his heart."

"Hell and death!" exclaimed Edric, "and you—"

"I was embedded in the cursed brambles and branches, which held me as though I had been fastened in a vice; I struggled madly to get free, and pounce upon the villain who stood contemplating his vile work, when suddenly he uttered a shriek. I saw a man in a dark habit, with a long knife glittering in his hand bounding towards him, and he instantly fled, closely followed by the stranger. I succeeded in tearing myself out of the thicket, and turn to my master's aid. I lifted him up, he still breathed, there was no water at hand—I would have given all I had for a little drop of water at that moment, and as I looked around in my bitter oppression of vain wishing, I saw the dew drops standing thick upon a fir close by. I hacked off a branch with my sword, and sprinkled his face with the little moisture I could get from it; I tore up the wet grass and applied it to his temples, and then he opened his eyes; he strove hard to speak, and at length he articulated faintly the word 'Violet;' he pointed towards London and then to heaven. I understood him, and promised, as my soul might need mercy hereafter, to bear the maidens safely to London; and then he wrung my hand, Edric, and smiled upon me, as he used when he was well and happy, and I had done some matter to please him, and I cried like a child—though tears to me are things of rare occurrence: he observed me, and motioned me to dry my eyes, and, as far I could judge by his feeble actions, to think no more about it; he motioned for my cross-hilted dagger, which I held to his mouth, and he kissed it devoutly. I think he would have made his shrift to me, for his lips moved as if he were about to speak, but a sudden rush of blood from his mouth and nose followed the effort, and when that ceased, his jaw dropped, and he fell back into my arms dead. I saw that his spirit had fled—that he was gone for ever—he who had been to me the kindest, gentlest master, the best friend a man could have—and I swore that his murderer should not escape my vengeance. It would have done no good to have remained longer by his side, and so, laying him gently upon the turf, I turned in pursuit of Martin du Bois. I searched the place around for a long distance all the night through; I was unable to discover him, or the stranger who was in pursuit of him. I listened to see if I could hear them flying or fighting, but in vain; and when the morning came I returned to the body of my poor master, and putting it upon my shoulder, brought it hither."

"What do you purpose doing now?" asked Edric, on seeing Gualtier about to depart directly he had concluded his tale.

"I will search the wood the whole day through," he returned; "I will put two of the people upon points which Martin du Bois cannot pass without their discovering him, and, if I meet with him, I will inflict upon him the most infernal torturing death I can invent."

"My poor master!" said Edric; "he had some presentiment he should perish. He requested that he should be laid in his mother's grave if he fell—his will shall be obeyed, and whatever else he has in his written paper commanded, even as if he were alive and stood before me issuing his orders."

"I will assist you in preparing his grave imme-

diately on my return," said Gualtier; "and do you look over the paper he has left, to see what his wishes are—inform the maidens of this sad affair, and bid them prepare for their departure for London; you can say that they will not, albeit my master is dead, have more to fear than if he were living, which in truth was little, for in his heart he was the soul of honour, a little clouded only by fashion, and misled by Martin du Bois' plausible villany, but would not have been guilty of anything really dishonourable to have saved himself from certain destruction."

"I believe it. I will see the maidens have no cause for alarm, never fear," returned Edric; "and that whatever it was his wish should be done, is done."

"And I will have his murderer's blood if he is above ground," cried Gualtier, grinding his teeth hard and clenching his fists; then he suddenly waved his hand to Edric, ran out, gave his orders to the two retainers who were to guard the passes, and then proceeded to hunt out Martin du Bois as he would a wolf from his lair.

When he had quitted, Edric went to the chamber where stood the cabinet in which Leon had placed the scroll containing his last commands; he opened it, and there he discovered it—he unrolled it, and perceived there were two papers, each with hastily traced characters upon them; but being unable to read, and quite sure that his wife could not, he was puzzled for a little while what to do, but at last resolved to carry them to the priest in the village and get him to decipher them; before he went, however, he visited Violet and Flora, and made them acquainted with the unfortunate fate of Leon. They were both much shocked, and although he had been the cause of so much alarm and pain to them, they shed tears of commiseration at his untimely end. Edric mentioned the scroll, and his purpose of taking it to the village, but Flora telling him that Violet could read to perfection, he immediately placed it in her hand, and desired her to make its contents known to him. She took them, and to her surprise found one superscribed, "to Violet Evesham;" she hastily opened it, and read as follows:—

"Maiden, when you receive this missive, I shall be no more; I am without kindred, and, as I have of late discovered, without friends. Had it been my good fortune to have possessed either, our acquaintance, if it had taken place, would have been under much less painful circumstances to you, and more honourable to myself; but the die is cast, and I am punished justly for my dereliction from the path I ought to have pursued; may the forgiveness I have obtained from you be extended to me by Him, before whose awful tribunal I may shortly stand! You and your friend, the maiden who is with you, are the only persons in the world I am conscious of having wronged; I conceive that I do no more than what is due to justice in seeking to repair to the best of my power what you have both through me suffered. Beyond restoring you to your friends uninjured, I have but one way to make the reparation, a poor one I confess, but it is the only one I possess, and that is by leaving to be equally divided between you the whole of the property I die possessed of, with but one reservation, that this estate of Exmoor, with all the grounds pertaining, be given to Edric and his wife Nanette, and to their heirs for ever; you will perceive on reading further I have so arranged that the property will pass into your hands without the possibility of dispute, and if wealth sufficient to purchase every luxury will compensate for the alarm and apprehension you have endured during your abduction, I shall at least have the consolation of having purchased my absolution; farewell, Violet, now, and for ever! The green turf would lay o'er my ashes more lightly had I not wronged you so vilely, but since my death has wiped out the blot, let not any unkind or harsh thought of thine press it more heavily down than does the sin itself; and if it will not be requesting too much of one, whom a short acquaintance has b sufficient to show me indubitably possesses a nature all gentleness, I ask of thee humbly, but earnestly, that in thy orisons, when thou dost appeal to Heaven for those who are near and dear to thee, the name may not be unremembered of Leon de la Agnelet."

Then followed a few words to Flora, and the rest contained instructions as to his property. The second paper was addressed to Edric, which, at his request, Violet read; it was comprised in few words, and ran thus,—

"Edric, I believe thee honest, faithful, and in every way worthy of the trust I am about to repose in thee. The instructions I have given thee respecting the maidens I have placed in thy charge to escort to London, thou wilt fulfil to the letter, if thou would'st not have my curse cling like the goad of an evil conscience to thee; but I do not doubt thee. It is my last wish that my body be placed by the side of my dear mother: fail not in performing this, but only when the moon casts the shadow of the two cypress trees which wave over the grave in one line upon it. There is a secret, but important motive in this, and my spirit will not rest peacefully if it be not complied with; no other time will serve but the moment when the stems of the trees make but one shadow. As you were born within this building, the son of one who served my father long and faithfully, and have thyself done the same to me, I bequeath thee the building, domain, and all that pertains to it, trusting that the memory of those thou hast served will not be abused at thy hands, or that the idle tales in circulation respecting one whose wisdom and great knowledge acquired for him in ignorant minds an evil reputation, will be acknowledged or accredited by thee. To Gualtier I bequeath a purse of a thousand merks, albeit he doth not deserve it—you will find it with this scroll. God be with and keep thee! Farewell!"

When Violet had concluded, she wiped the tears from her eyelids which were thickly gathered there, and returned to Edric the paper directed to him, retaining the one addressed to herself, announcing the determination to place it in her foster father's hands, to be made use of as he thought proper.

"And when are we to leave here, good Edric?" said Flora? "you have the task of conveying us to London, it seems; pray let us depart as soon as ever you can?"

"You shall quit here as soon after my poor master is laid in his grave as you please," returned Edric, trying to brush away a tear unobserved.

"Can we not before?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Why?" he asked, in a tone which, if it did not convey that he thought her request unfeeling, it did that it was unreasonable.

"Because," she replied confusedly, "I—I don't like to sleep in this dreary desolate place," with a dead body almost the next room to me."

"If that is your only reason," replied Edric, with a mournful smile, "you have little cause for apprehension—he who would not harm you while living, will not when dead, be assured; to-night the moon will be at the full, and at midnight I will lay him, as he wished, by his mother's side—"

"So soon?" observed Violet.

"He is dead!" replied Edric; "and in this place

there can be no pomp or show, or tribute of respect for his memory, save what we bear in our own bosoms for him; it will, therefore, be of no avail to keep him above the ground—he will sleep as lightly with the green turf waving over him, as he would were he to remain a week upon the richest couch in England's broad lands. When the moon is at the full to-night, maiden, I will inter him, and I should esteem it a favour if you would stand by and see him laid in the earth—that, should it be at any time needed, I may have a witness who can come forward and prove that I obeyed his commands in everything."

"It will be a melancholy task, but I will comply with thy wish," answered Violet.

"I thank thee most heartily," exclaimed Edric; "Nanette will attend on thee and keep thee company, and I will make known to thee when I need thy presence—farewell until then." He bowed and disappeared, leaving Violet and Flora to pass another dreary day there.

At night Gualtier returned, pale and weary with a long and fatiguing search—one which proved unsuccessful. Edric said naught to him respecting the papers—he knew too well the character of the man he had to deal with—but communicated to him his intention of burying Leon that night. Gualtier seemed surprised, but it was not of long continuance, and acquiesced in the policy of it, so far as it facilitated the return of Violet and Flora to London. A priest had been sent for to perform the funeral obsequies, and he arrived in the evening, to pray over the dead body, which Edric had washed, and from which he had removed every appearance of the violent death he had met with. When he had sprinkled the bed with holy water, and repeated all the prayers used upon such mournful occasions, he descended to the lower apartments, and awaited the arrival of the hour fixed upon for its interment, while Edric and Gualtier busied themselves with opening the graves in which were deposited the bodies of the two wives of Guthelred de la Agnelet. When they had completed their task, they sat and watched the moon as she rose and flung the shadow of the two cypress trees in long lines until they were merging into one line, and when the time had nearly arrived for their conjunction, Edric gave the signal, and with the aid of Gualtier and two retainers, he bore the body of the ill-fated gallant to its last earthly resting-place. His signal had been heard by his wife, and she communicated to Violet and Flora that the time had arrived for their presence—they appeared, and joining the little procession, followed the corpse to the garden, which, when it reached the grave, was placed upon the edge without being lowered into it.

The priest, a very old man, repeated the prayers over the body in a faltering tone of voice, but one which teemed with deep feeling, so that those who listened to its feeble but earnest sound as it ascended in the quiet air, seemed to have each word forcibly and solemnly engraven upon their hearts; and when he appealed for mercy and remission of sins for him who had in the spring time of life, in the pride of his youth and manliness, in the full tide of young blood, of health and of manhood, been violently deprived of his life by one of his own race, never, never again to smile upon his fellow-creatures, to tread the green earth, or walk among the friends or the beloved of his youth, there was not a dry eye among those who stood around; the audible sobs of the maidens were responded to by the deep groan of Gualtier—the strong spasm of deep feeling which passed through the stalwart frame of honest Edric, and the powerful emotion displayed by the retainers, who could have coupled with their grief fierce oaths of revenge.

As the prayers were drawing to a conclusion, the moon had arrived at the point which made the shadow of the cypress trees become one, and lie directed athwart the grave; Edric immediately prepared to lower the body into the grave. At this moment, two fierce dogs, belonging to Leon, rushed simultaneously up to the grave, and startled every one there by each uttering a long and melancholy howl. After the momentary confusion which their unexpected appearance created had subsided, Edric endeavoured to drive them from the spot, but without avail—they showed their long fangs, and their hair bristled up as though—if he persisted in his efforts—they would fasten on him and tear him to pieces; yet they had hitherto been to him exceedingly docile and obedient, though fierce to others. He was surprised at this strange change in their demeanour; but there were so many mysteries connected with the place, that a moment's reflection made him desist in his attempt, and they remained there, making every one shudder by their dismal wailing.

Gualtier assisted Edric in lowering the body of Leon down, and when it had reached the earth, and was placed by the side of her who had given him birth, there of a sudden arose a gust of wind, so violent that it seemed as if it would tear up the trees which grew around; it dashed along with fearful fury, whistling, and in its effects, like a fierce hurricane. A deep black cloud passed across the moon, making the place around suddenly dark—the dogs yelled horribly, and the affrighted spectators could scarcely keep their feet in the tempest which rushed by them; the boughs and trees bent and rocked and crashed to and fro, and the whole spot seemed the centre of a raging whirlwind.

This singular but fearful storm continued for a minute, then the cloud passed from before the moon, the wind ceased as suddenly as it had arisen; the dogs slunk away, and all became as quiet and placid as it had previously been—a silence of a few minutes elapsed, and each looked on the face of the other in wonder and bewilderment. Edric stepped forward when he had recovered in some degree from the effects of this strange occurrence, and looked into the grave; he uttered a shriek of horror, and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out some dreadful sight, and then, suddenly removing them, seized a spade, and, with a desperate energy, commenced hurling the damp mould into the grave. As Gualtier, surprised at his strange conduct, was about to advance to his side, he was struck by the sight of the old priest lying upon the ground a short distance from them. He ran hastily to him, raised him, and cried out loudly, with horror and astonishment blended—

"Holy Virgin! Edric, the old man is dead!"

Edric, however, heeded him not, but kept on with intense excitement at his labour. The retainers assisted Gualtier to raise the old father, but only to discover he had spoken the truth—the vital spark had fled. This was a new event, which did not tend to diminish the terror already created; and Nanette, herself overcome by what she had seen, led Violet and Flora away, almost swooning with fright. When Edric had half-filled the grave, and his extraordinary excitement had partially subsided, and he became conscious of the death of the old priest, he threw down his spade and joined those who were around him, and trying vainly to restore him to life, he looked upon him for a moment, and then said—

"Bear him away—the good old man has breathed his last, 'tis in vain you strive to restore him—he is with his Maker—God rest his soul!"

"Amen!" cried Gualtier and the retainers together.

"The strange sights we have witnessed have been more than the feebleness of his great age could bear, continued Edric; "carry him into the turret for to-night; in the morning his body must be conveyed to the village, but of the cause of his death let as little be said as may be."

"These are strange and mysterious things we have this night witnessed," said Gualtier, "and tell us but too truly of the awful doings and wondrous powers of the Chevalier Leon's father. I wonder—"

"Peace!" interrupted Edric, almost sternly; "our wonderings, our conjectures, will teach us nothing. It is, therefore, in vain to indulge in them—try and forget all you have this night seen; bear the old man's body away, and I will fill up the grave."

"But what saw you in the grave?" asked Gualtier, earnestly.

"A sight which might have turned the dark hair of youth to the whiteness of extreme age at a single glance."

"What was it?" he questioned, eagerly.

"That which no power on earth will induce me to disclose to mortal," returned Edric, decisively, and continued—"you to your work, and I to mine."

"Why will you not disclose it?" demanded Gualtier, regarding him with a gaze of astonishment.

"I have a motive, which is as strong as my determination, to conceal what I have seen," replied Edric.

"I cannot see what motive you can have to hide from us that which we should have all seen had we been near enough," persisted Gualtier. "Besides, the death of the last of the race should remove any motive for concealment which you can have; therefore, why keep secret from us what we were as likely to have seen as you?"

"But you did not see it," replied Edric, unmoved; "that is enough, seek to know no more; were you to stand there questioning me until the day of judgment I would answer thee as now I do. What I have seen shall remain for ever locked in my breast, and you will do well and wisely if you follow my example, and never speak more of what you have this night seen. Remove the body of the poor old man, and waste no more time in trying to obtain that which I will never part with."

As he concluded, he turned from them, picked up his spade, and went on with his task of filling the grave, and Gualtier finding there was no chance, at least at present, of obtaining an answer to his queries, assisted the retainers in bearing the dead body of the priest into the building.

When it had been carefully deposited in one of the lower apartments, he left the retainers to watch by it, and, leaving word he would return by daylight, he again dived into the forest, in the hope that he might yet encounter Martin du Bois; he knew that he must be still somewhere yet in the vicinity, and trusted to fall in with him and wipe out the debt which he had incurred in thus basely slaying his master. To do Gualtier justice, although he possessed a nature not to be much moved by virtue or morality where his interest was materially concerned, and would be bad enough to slay a fellow creature for a good consideration, as the reader has seen, yet he could be moved by the same feeling, which, under similar circumstances, would have influenced better men, to have hunted out Martin du Bois, and, without listening to any appeal for mercy, have inflicted upon him the the death to which he had remorselessly consigned Leon.

It was not until his death transpired, that Gualtier properly understood his value, or how much he was really attached to him, and when he saw him slain so treacherously, without being able to prevent it, a spirit of revenge, of deadly retaliation was roused within him, which nothing but Martin's heart's blood could allay; and though the mere destruction of Martin could bring him no actual good, there was no amount of gold, however great, would prevent him striving to accomplish it, and thus, although he felt in some degree the effects of the singular occurrences attending his master's interment upon him, rather tending to cow his courage than assist it, he shook it resolutely off, and determined to give no chance away that should place Martin du Bois within his grasp.

He chose a different route to any he had hitherto taken, and suffered no recess or tree, likely to conceal a human being, to pass without undergoing a scrutiny which satisfied him that he whom he sought had obtained no shelter there. He several times puzzled himself respecting the stranger who followed Martin so closely, and with such a guttural cry of fierce and deadly hatred, and wondered with no little anxiety what was the result of the chase: the wood was exceedingly intricate, and the river Ex, which flowed through it, was in many parts very deep, wide, and completely impassable without the aid of boats, and of those there were none.

The stranger had driven Martin to a part where the river was broad, very deep, and also rapid, and he had no chance of escaping but by distancing his pursuer, and doubling upon him in some of the labyrinths of the wood. And in this was Gualtier's principal dependence placed of encountering him after he had lost himself in the windings and mazy paths with which it abounded. He, therefore, took a zig-zag direction to the point upon which the stranger must have forced Martin du Bois, and trusted that he should meet with him hiding himself, worn out with fatigue, in some covert, or wandering about vainly seeking for a path to lead him clear of the wood, and beyond the reach of pursuers.

Gualtier had quitted the turret some two hours, and was stealing stealthily and cautiously along, looking anxiously in every direction for the fugitive, as well as keeping a sharp look-out to prevent the attack of any stray wolf that might have a desire to make a meal of him—and there were plenty in the wood who were that way inclined—when he arrived at a copse more dreary than any he had yet visited, and one that required an extra amount of vigilance in its inspection, and he accordingly stole through it with the most stealthy circumspection; but even though he imagined he was proceeding with such caution that nothing could elude him, he suddenly found himself in the strong grip of a man, a bright blade glittering before his eyes, and a voice muttering fiercely in his ear—

"Knave! whom seek'st thou?"

He made no reply, but recovering hastily from the startled state into which this unexpected situation had thrown him, he struggled hard, and with a powerful exertion succeeded in extricating himself from his unknown assailant, and, placing himself in a posture of defence, awaited, with his drawn sword, a renewal of the attack; it was not made, but the assailant advanced undauntedly to the point of his weapon, brandishing a long knife, as though with that weapon he could successfully compete with his better armed opponent, and repeated his question fiercely. Gualtier, at the first moment, had imagined he was assaulted by Martin du Bois in his own proper person, but a second glance, and a repetition of the voice, proved in an instant that he was mistaken; but who

his questioner was, he knew not yet; he fancied he had heard the voice before; he scrutinized the form as well as the semi-darkness would permit without satisfying himself as to his identity, and it was not until the question had been a third time repeated, and with more virulence than before, that he answered, and then he said—

"Why do you ask?"

"Because, if you speak truly, and answer as I suspect you will, either you will forego your intention, or you or I will not leave this copse alive!"

"Indeed!" sneered Gualtier, "you speak boldly."

"And will act [illegible]," was the reply.

"Doubtless," Gualtier, "you are now not

acting as one who possesses a faint heart—we shall see if you support your part as well throughout. What name does your suspicions give the person of whom I am in search?"

"Were you not one of the rascals who assisted in bearing off two maidens from London, and through the aid and counsel of a villain, bringing them down here?"

"Question for question—Are you not in search of him at whose instigation the maidens were carried off? I have my suspicion as well as you; and if you are he who was on the heels of Martin du Bois immediately after he slew my master, know, too, that I am on the search for him, and if he comes within my reach, nothing shall save him from death by my hand; if, on the contrary, you be a friend to Martin du Bois, stand aside and interfere not with my purpose, or if you do, stand prepared for the worst."

"Your enmity to Martin du Bois would make thee my friend, but that I know you to have been guilty of villanous deeds; but ere I parley with thee farther, or answer thy questions, tell me what has become of the maidens, and to what vile treatment have they been subjected?"

"They are safe, and as unharmed as before they were taken from London, which they will themselves avouch. And now tell me, are you not he whom men call Ethelbert, and the uncle of the maiden named Violet?"

"Your motive in asking that question?"

"Because Martin du Bois owes you a deadly spite; he offered three hundred merks to me to slay you, and has vowed to accomplish your death by breaking your heart by means of your niece, or by burying his skean in it."

"I am aware of his villany, and have little to thank you for in not earning the sum he offered you for executing his murderous wish."

"Let that pass; it is sufficient for you to know I did not earn it, and that I have sworn a bitter oath that were he to offer me thrice three thousand merks, I would not spare his life. You have been on his track since he gave my master that damnable, treacherous, cowardly death-blow—what has become of him?"

"He has secreted himself in some part of this copse not far from this, and did I but know the ground, ere this he should have perished."

"He shall not survive long if he is near here; I know the wood well, I was bred in it; the path direct from here leads to the river, which is impassable but to a long and very strong swimmer—"

"And not that is Martin du Bois," chuckled Ethelbert, for he it was; "I remember his being nearly drowned once in the Severn—three strokes as a swimmer would have saved his life."

"That is well," said Gualtier; "then do you take that path; there is but one other which tends to the same point—it is circuitous, but it has but one outlet, and there are no others besides these; if he is near here, we must unkennel him."

"It was then he who occasioned Violet and her friend to be torn from us."

"It was—he planned it all."

"Enough; they are staying at yon dreary building I know, for I tracked them thither, though I did not arrive until I saw Martin du Bois and thy master quit it to decide their quarrel."

"One which, as you will doubtless hear, was occasioned by my master's discovery of Martin's villany, and his own shame and regret for having carried off the maidens, who were to return under the charge of myself and a young woodman who had the care of the turret when my master was away, with orders, which it would have been as much as our lives were worth to break, to see them in your possession again as unharmed as when they were taken."

"I shall know better how to estimate what has been done when I have seen and conversed with the maidens. Now to our task; if you should meet the villain, Martin, and, in attacking, find him too powerful for thee, fail not to give thy tongue free exercise; I will not be long in reaching thy side, and giving him his due."

"He too powerful for me!" echoed Gualtier, scornfully! "not were he twice as skilful as he is. I will take right good care that he treat me not to the same treachery which he did my poor master, who would have suffered the dog, villain as he was, to have escaped, rather than have basely taken the slightest advantage of him; but may I be consigned to everlasting torment hereafter, if, when once I get him in my power, I spare him—not though he offered me the wealth of a kingdom."

"I have not much cause to place faith in thee, but in this instance I will trust thee; thou sayest this path leads to the borders of the river where it is deepest and broadest?"

"Aye, and where it runs swiftest."

"I will take it; there shall not be a stem, a brake, a branch, or a cover, I will pass without being assured it affords him no secret place of safety, and if I but unkennel him, I fear not for the rest."

"If he lies in your track you will reach the river before me; but should I be so fortunate as to turn him out, and he be swifter of foot than I, you will see him the moment he arrives at the point of the path that opens on the river—it is not fifty yards from where you will stand—he cannot therefore escape."

"And shall not. Let us waste no more time. Away!"

"I am gone—now bright eyes and staunch limbs befriend me!"

As Gualtier finished, he glided away to the left, and Ethelbert kept straight on in the path which the former was pursuing when stayed by the latter. His eagle-eyed chase of Grif of the Bloody Hand was equalled in this search for Martin du Bois; he had not forgotten the facility with which he could worm himself through the most mazy and intricate places; and the burning desire he had to accomplish the destruction of Martin made him put in practice every power he possessed which would assist its realization: he crawled and wound through covert and thicket, never for an instant losing sight of the path, or suffering any place in the vicinity of his progress to pass uninspected. His movements were slow, and, as they had heretofore been, snake-like, keeping up to the full the name which he had given himself—one which he had assumed for the sake of working upon the superstitious minds of those with whom he should have to deal, and thus acquire, by the aid of a seeming mystery, a power with which nature had not really invested him. What is termed a stout heart—which means the possession of unflinching courage, backed by a strong and resolute determination—will give a single man the advantage over thrice his number, if they be not equally gifted, and this was a truism which Ethelbert had long since discovered. The stern, and to most minds, terrible duty to which he had devoted himself, had removed every vestige of fear, or rather weakness, his nature had originally possessed.

His constant intimacy with danger and death had made him callous to all hazard, and where he once would have been merciful, to become inflexibly revenge—the sacrifice of those who came within implacable. Sworn to a bloody and exterminating

the circle his oath embraced—he had looked upon, and still did so, with no more compunction then he would at slaughtering a wolf or any other vermin; rather, in fact, as the accomplishment of a worthy deed. Unlike the robber or cold-blooded ruffian, who slew without discrimination whoever came in his path, so that he gained by it, he followed only those who had done him great injury, or had been the cause or assistants of it; and pursued them with the same feeling that any man would hunt to its death a noxious animal that had destroyed his child or any beloved object.

He had schooled himself to show no pity to those he had marked out for vengeance, and once in his power, there was no hope for them. Martin du Bois, from his repeated acts of villany to Violet, independent of his being the son of his bitterest foe, had raised in him a fierce and inextinguishable hatred; the last deed to her, of which he was cognizant, that of carrying her forcibly away, was quite sufficient to have ensured his direst vengeance; he placed it upon a level with the abstraction of his own beloved wife Editha, and knowing how unprincipled a villain was Martin du Bois, his heart was on fire, until he had known to what extent she had suffered, and he had made reprisal.

Aware of her desolate situation, and too well acquainted with the base passions of him in whose power she was, he had worked himself to such a pitch of intense vindictiveness, that had his own perdition been involved in the accomplishment of Martin's death, he would not have turned back an inch; this torture of mind had kept him incessantly on their track, when after slaying Baldric he had secreted himself, deeming stratagem more available than a mad rush on his part to rescue his niece, with every prospect of being surrounded by numbers and slain, taking from her every chance of having a friend near her: he had been eluded for a time in their departure from the hostel, but an accidental encounter of part of the marauders who had pursued them, and the dropping of a few hasty expressions respecting them, had given him a clue of which he had not failed to take advantage.

After a fatiguing ride, which would have completely knocked up ordinary men, he arrived in time to encounter Martin and Leon wending their way to the mound—had followed them—watched the combat in the hope of seeing Martin slain—had witnessed his base act, and had immediately dashed at him; but Martin, influenced by a horror he could not control, fled almost with the speed of wind, and Ethelbert, labouring under the effects of his long journey, was unable to rival his swiftness. But though distanced completely, he had kept so well upon his track that he knew he had not quitted the wood, and was, if he could have given up his watch of the path along which he had tracked him, hidden at no great distance from him. The sudden appearance of Gualtier had induced him to believe that he was prowling about to assist Martin, although he had no good reason for such a supposition, and he determined to prevent his interference by the shortest mode—that of slaying him if he refused to quit the spot. The result of their meeting has been shewn, and Ethelbert now moved on in the search of Martin with a strong impression that nothing could prevent his discovery of the wretch, or save him from the punishment so deservedly his due.

He had proceeded some distance slowly but surely, when his quick ears detected the sound of rustling leaves not very far before him; he paused instantly—there was no wind stirring, and the trees and shrubs were as motionless as though they were carved in stone; it was, therefore, quite conclusive to him that he was approaching Martin's place of concealment, unless he was disturbing some wolf from his lair; he had been too often in contact with the latter, to fear appoaching closer to satisfy himself, and, therefore, be it wolf or Martin which had caused the rustling, he was resolved to unkennel him. He took a firmer grasp of his knife, and dashed forward to the spot from whence the sound had proceeded, and as he gained it the dark form of a man rose up swiftly—it was Martin du Bois, and he leaped upon him, but he was met with a firm grasp, and before he could recover from the impetus he had given himself, and be able to stand firm, he was seized and hurled to the ground with great force, his head striking the stem of a tree in his descent with such violence as to nearly render him insensible; but under the influence of strong excitement the frame is capable of enduring far more injury than when it is unaffected by any strong matter, and had Ethelbert been cool and unexcited, the probabilities are, that he would have been completely stunned; but although the blow was tremendous he shook it off, and by a powerful exertion he regained his feet, and roared after Martin as he perceived him dashing madly through the brakes and underwood—

"Dog, thou'rt mine! escape is hopeless!"

He rushed after him, making his wearied limbs subservient to his mind, and forcing them to a speed which nothing but his maddened state of mind would have impelled. Had Martin possessed no fear of Ethelbert beyond what he would to have encountered any man divested of any supernatural attribute, he would have stood his ground, and trusted to his strength and capabilities in a combat, for an escape; but the circumstances under which he had always been thrown in contact with him, possessing a strange and mysterious character, acted upon his superstitious mind, and in spite of his endeavours to the contrary, awed him, and made him dread him as much as though he really were a spirit of darkness pursuing him to his destruction; if he had not been cowed by that feeling it would have been an easy matter for him to have sprung upon him when he fell, and burying his sword in his body, have rid himself of a foe, who, if it were in the power of mortal, would accomplish his death.

When he saw him fall he felt as though he had cast away some noxious reptile, at which human nature loathingly shudders, and fled from it to avoid its again fastening itself upon him; he had in his covert had a long rest, and though he felt faint for want of proper nourishment, yet berries and wild fruits on which he had fed had prevented him suffering the horrors and the weakness of starvation; he therefore was still able to make good way, and hoped, that having hitherto distanced his implacable foe, and succeeded in secreting himself almost securely, he should yet be able to escape him altogether.

Urged on by that hope, he did his best to make the distance between them great enough to be a guarantee for his safety, in a short a time as possible; and ever and anon looked behind him as he flew, to see how much he was gaining upon his pursuer. He soon discovered that he was leaving him behind him fast; re-assured by this agreeable fact, he made a still greater exertion to increase his speed, and when failing breath reminded him that he must either slacken his speed, or again for a time secrete himself, he emerged unexpectedly from the path upon the river. A hasty glance left and right soon convinced him that he would have to run a long distance, and that at a pace impossible for him to attain, to avoid his pursuer's discovering which route he had chosen; he therefore,

on the impulse of the moment, returned to the path he had just quitted, and rushed into a thicket close at hand.

As he forced himself among the thickly clustering bushes, congratulating himself on his good fortune in hitting upon a spot which appeared so well calculated for concealment, he was alarmed by a low growl, which sounded as if it proceeded from a spot close to him. He looked eagerly and anxiously around him, and was not long in perceiving the large bright eyes of a huge wolf glaring fiercely on him! he uttered a cry of horror, and tore himself from the spot— though, entangled in the straggling bushes, he accomplished it with difficulty. He had barely upraised himself, when the wolf sprang after him and made a leap upon him; he however, threw him off, at the same moment dropping his sword, and with a shriek fled. The wolf, who was starving, was more nimble than he, and ere he had flown far, again leaped upon him: they had now a fierce struggle, Martin striving desperately to hurl him off, but in vain; he was only able to keep him from fastening his teeth in his throat by getting a firm hold of his jowl, which he grasped with all the strength he was master of, and then he strove to disengage himself by attempting to force the ferocious beast to the ground, but wanted the necessary power to accomplish it.

They both struggled, and twisted, and turned round until they reached the banks of the river—Martin hoped he should be able to get to the brink, and fling the wolf in. With tremendous exertions he made towards it; the brute reared upon his hind legs, keeping to him with a tenacity nothing could shake off. When they gained it, Martin endeavoured to swing round, placed the wolf on the verge, and then thrusting him back, quit his hold of his jaw, and fling him into the river. The banks were above the level of the water about two feet, and he expected, while the beast was struggling to get out he should be able to seek another place of concealment, one which was not so disagreeably tenanted.

As he strove to put his project into execution his eye suddenly caught sight of Ethelbert advancing, and he frantically redoubled his efforts to rid himself of his bloody-thirsty assailant, ere his no less vindictive foe arrived; but the wolf, which was extraordinarily large and powerful, and raging with famine, was too eager for his prey to be with even desperate exertion shaken off; and at this critical juncture, Martin placed his foot upon a stone, which giving way with a sudden jerk, caused him to sprain his ankle and fall upon one knee.

The wolf, finding him sink down thus, gave a sudden roar, accompanied by a fresh bound, and as Martin happened to be in the very position in which he had endeavoured to place the rapacious brute, his accident proved fatal to him. He knew the danger of his situation, and shrieked horribly with terror and despair. It was but for a moment that he hung upon the brink—the next instant he was hurled headlong into the stream, carrying the wolf with him; they both sunk, and as Ethelbert reached the spot from which they had fallen, they both rose to the surface—the wolf swimming, and Martin clinging to him, as tenaciously now as he had before tried to get away from him; they had been carried, by the force with which they had fallen in, nearly to the middle of the stream; and the wolf, cowed by his situation, made direct for the shore without continuing his attack more than his progress being impeded and rendered slow by Martin's weight, he turned his head several times and bit fiercely at him, but without succeeding in fastening his long fangs in him.

Martin's situation was now a terrible one—in every way death stared him in the face: if he reached the shore in safety, there stood Ethelbert to encounter him, assisted in all probability by the wolf, and if he tried to remain where he was, or to gain the other side, he must drown; for he could not swim. He was agonizedly conscious of the horrors of his position, and had he suffered no more for his numerous sins than he did in the few minutes he was thus surrounded, his punishment would have been almost adequate to his crimes.

His frantic screams and appeals for help and mercy to Ethelbert were awful, but they gained nothing for him but a loud taunting exulting laugh of triumph. The worst, however, had not yet arrived—he had still another foe to encounter, one no less relentless or vindictive than either of those by whom he had been already attacked; while he was shrieking for mercy as he drew nearer to shore, and the crisis of his fate was fast approaching, Gualtier arrived, out of breath by his exertion; he had heard from a distance Martin's shrill cries for help, and concluded that he had been discovered and attacked by Ethelbert, and as he so strongly desired to at least have a hand in consummating his death, he ran at the top of his speed in the direction from which the sound appeared to issue, and reached the spot as Martin was struggling to keep himself above water by clinging desperately to the wolf. A glance sufficed to show what had transpired; he breathed a shout of fierce joy, and ere Ethelbert, who was earnestly watching the result of Martin's effort to gain the shore, could perceive his purpose, he divested himself hastily of his cotehardie, his capuchon, and his boots, and placing his long skean between his teeth, leaped into the water and swam swiftly towards Martin, who with, if possible, increased horror, saw him approach; he yelled, he prayed, entreated in the most abject, pitiful, and frenzied manner for mercy.

"Spare me!" he shrieked, "have mercy! I will give up all my wealth to ye—spare me! I will be your slave, your dog—do not slay me. You seek my father's life; I'll give him up to ye, I swear, if you will not murder me. Spare me!—spare me!"

The only answer from Gaultier was a chuckle—a grin, forced through his clenched teeth—of delight at having him in his power; he heeded no appeal, nor did the passionate cries instinct with bitter agony of the despairing wretch have more effect towards softening him than would the blows of a feather upon a mass of solid steel. He soon reached and seized him by the hair; Martin at the same moment quitted his hold of the wolf, which made for the shore, and caught Gaultier by the throat, using his little remaining strength with the most desperate energy.

Gaultier like lightning took his knife from his mouth and plunged the deadly weapon ferociously into his neck, drew it out and repeated it with frightful force as they both sunk together struggling; the water around was speedily dyed with Martin's blood, which poured from him profusely; they appeared again on the surface, still struggling, the latter retaining his hold, and the former still striking madly at him, again they sunk, to again appear, and still in the same situation; Martin's fingers were compressed around his slayer's throat with all the iron rigidity of a death grip. Unable to get himself free, and feeling nearly suffocated, Gualtier tried to swim for the shore, but with a sensation of terrible apprehension found himself so clogged, so entangled, by the body of the dying—nay, all but dead man's weight—that every effort he made to strike out was checked, and the ability to keep himself from sinking prevented; the water began to pour into his mouth and ears, to get also into his

eyes and blind him; he made great exertion with one hand and his feet to keep himself afloat, but his breath was stopped coming and going freely by the tight hold Martin's fingers still retained; he found his senses failing him, he gave one long loud shriek for Ethelbert to assist him, and then with the body of him he had slain he went slowly but surely down—down, never to rise again. An eddy, with its fast spreading gyres, was all which the next moment showed where they had been.

Ethelbert, in the mean time, had been engaged with the wolf, which, the moment it reached the shore, flew upon and attacked him fiercely; he had but his long knife to aid him to repel its attacks, but he had been too accustomed to conflicts of this nature to fear to meet it, or attempt to fly, ill-armed as he was, from a contest in which he was pretty certain of coming off victor. The struggle was a hard one, the wolf being fierce and powerful; but the repeated tremendous stabs Ethelbert gave him, burying at each blow his knife to the hilt, drew so much blood from him, that he grew weaker and weaker, his struggles becoming fainter each moment, until he fell dead, covered with wounds. Ethelbert scarce suffered himself to get breath from his exertion, when he turned to see what success had attended Gualtier; but was startled to find no trace of him or Martin there—even the blood-stained water had passed away, and the dark river flowed silently on, without exhibiting the smallest sign of having a few minutes previously borne a part in a death struggle, or furnishing for the combatants a deep grave. He was at no loss to guess how it had come to pass that he was the only one now left in this solitary place; but though he felt satisfied that they had both perished, he walked up and down the bank in a vague expectation of seeing some evidence of their proximity, but only to render his belief more certain, that Heaven had punished one who richly deserved it, and the other, who was not altogether undeserving of the fate he had met with. Once more, and for the last time, he cast his eyes along the surface of the swift, black, unrippled stream, but saw its smooth face remain unbroken, and pass on its solemn way without a token or sound to tell who were lying dead in its dreary depths. He shuddered, for the gloominess of the place, with the strong sense of the terrible death of those who so recently had been full of life, was upon him, and he muttered a hasty prayer, crossed himself, and, blood-stained with his recent contest with the wolf, he sheathed his weapon and departed from the scene.

He retraced his steps along the path he had pursued when following Martin, and made towards the turret which contained Violet and Flora. Daylight was fast approaching, and the cool air it sent to herald its arrival refreshed his brow, which exertion, and the nature of the scene he had witnessed and taken part in, had rendered hot and feverish. The necessity for a protraction of energy beyond the wants of nature having passed away, the effects of a long endured and considerable fatigue stole upon him, and made his progress in consequence rather slow. The sun was somewhat above the horizon—therefore, when he reached the turret and knocked for admittance, his summons was answered by Edric, who started at seeing a stranger, and he pale and haggard, with blood-stained habiliments; his first impression was that he was a marauder, and his request to know his purpose in seeking admittance was made in harsh tones, to which Ethelbert replied with some asperity; but a few words explained his purpose, as well as who he was, and accordingly Edric was about to usher him into the presence of Violet, but he checked him, and requested first to change his attire, and remove the effects of his weariness, with which Edric quickly complied, and towards the evening he arose, after a long sleep, refreshed and free from all appearance of the deeds in which he had been engaged. He thanked Edric for his attention, and related what had transpired in the wood.

"Gualtier then hath perished with Martin du Bois?" exclaimed Edric, when he had concluded.

"He has!" replied Ethelbert, "and by a death which, though terrible, was scarce less than his due; he had imbrued his hands in blood at the request, and for a sum proffered by, him he slew, and heaven has taken that method of punishing him for the deed. What has been done with his master's body?"

"It has been laid in the spot, and at a certain hour, according to his direction," returned Edric. "I have seen strange sights in this building—things which would blanch the cheeks of those who boast the stoutest hearts; but I have grown familiar to them, and heed them not. I am no coward—I have a clear conscience, and fear nothing which any man may look on undauntedly; but, as I am a sinful man, I saw a sight which made my blood run cold with horror when my master was laid in his grave yesternight."

"And that sight was—" exclaimed Ethelbert.

"I have made a vow never to reveal it but on my death-bed," replied Edric, "perhaps not then. Were I to tell thee what I saw, you would in all probability laugh and sneer, and call it an absurd conjuration of my brain—would esteem me mad or a superstitious fool; and as there can be no good arise from its revelation, I will confine it to my own breast; but of this rest assured, that there are sights and mysteries in nature, matters which are superhuman, which do exist; scoff at them as you will. I can vouch this, for I have seen them, have been subjected to their influences, and have had such reason to know and remember their existence, that while I survive, though not given to easy credence of things seemingly impossible, nothing can make me disbelieve the evidence of my senses, or make me willingly mix in scenes or live in places where I am likely again to encounter anything of the same description; therefore, I am resolved to pull this place down, not leave a stone of it standing, sell the domain, and retire to live with my dear little wife peacefully for the remainder of my days in another part of the country."

"I will not seek to persuade you to break your vow of silence," said Ethelbert, when he had concluded, "although I naturally feel a desire to have an explanation of the strange sight you have mentioned, albeit I have no belief in anything which may not be tested by nature's laws. Whatever has been presented to you, has, it is evident by the disclosure of your intentions for the future, taken too strong a hold of you to be reasoned away; I shall, therefore, not attempt it, though, knowing well what may be done by chemical powers over weak and unlearned minds. Let it pass. Is my niece aware of my being thus near her?"

"No; I thought it the better plan to wait until you were ready to meet her and the maiden who is with her; they have been so anxious to return to London to you, that you would have scarce had your sleep out if they had known you were here; they are in an apartment above. My wife is sitting with them, and, if you please, I will tell them now you are here."

"Stay, I will accompany you."

"Will they not be alarmed to meet thus suddenly with you?"

"No; they know me to have a strange manner; they may be a little startled, but nothing more—lead on."

Edric looked at him with some surprise, and thought, too, that he had a strange manner; he bowed, said nothing, but led the way to the apartment in which Violet and Flora were sitting, and, knocking at the door, received the permission to enter. He was about to pave the way, by saying that he had brought a friend of their's to see them, when he was prevented by Flora uttering a scream, which was drawn from her by seeing Ethelbert suddenly glide from behind Edric and place himself before Violet, who also gave a half-stifled shriek. Edric, for the moment, fancied he had been deceived by Ethelbert, and was about to pounce upon him, when he saw Violet, recovering from her astonishment, fling herself joyfully into his arms; and Flora, half terrified, yet half delighted, that there was now somebody near to them who belonged to them, advance and hold out her hand to welcome him.

Nanette, who had already learned from Edric of his arrival, though startled by his sudden appearance, was not therefore surprised, withdrew with Edric to give them an opportunity of talking unrestrainedly; of which they failed not to take advantage. Ethelbert questioned them respecting all that had transpired during their separation, which Violet answered by giving him a faithful narration of every event which had occurred, assisted frequently by Flora, who amply detailed her fears, her anticipations, and her prayers, much to Ethelbert's amusement, who, while he smiled at her simplicity, could not but be affected by the unconscious evidences she gave of her disinterested affection for Violet. It may be easily imagined that Violet's first questions were respecting her foster-father, Halbert, of whom Ethelbert could tell her no more than that he had promised to wait at the hostel in Chepeside until his return, which now, he said, should be as speedy as could be effected, and named the morning's dawn for their departure.

That night both Violet and Flora slept with lighter hearts than they had done for some time previously, and when twilight was merging into daylight, they had risen from their beds, and were ready to depart. Edric resolved to accompany them, in order to fulfil the last wishes of his master, and saw that the horses and everything necessary were ready when wanted. Nanette was to remain, during his absence, with his family; and upon his return, he determined to put into execution the project he had detailed to Ethelbert. When everything was quite ready for their departure, Violet kissed Nanette, and said—

"My kind friend, to your sympathy and kind-heartedness I am indebted for all the comfort and softening of the evil of my situation I have had since I have been here. Had you been placed in my situation, and received the same kindness and attention which you have shown me, you would know how deeply those who had done you such service deserved your sincerest thanks; to the extent which, in such a position, you would consider them due, so I render them to you. If presents or words could add to the thankfulness with which I remember your acts to me, I would heap them upon you; but as I am satisfied without such testimony you will believe me, I will say but little, and not throw a doubt upon your disinterestedness, by proffering large gifts; I will only present you with this gem, this small heart, fashioned of gold and precious stones, to wear in remembrance of me, and beg earnestly that you will never fail at any time that you may need the aid of a friend, to call upon me; I shall most gladly take advantage of such opportunity to prove to you that I have neither forgotten, nor estimate lightly, your tender and affectionate alleviation of the cares and danger to which, in my recent situation, I was so much exposed. Farewell—may the Holy Virgin guide and guard thee! We shall meet again, I hope sincerely, and under circumstances more pleasing to us both, but none that could more unquestionably prove the goodness of thy heart, thy worth, or the sincerity of thy friendship. Of all the kind friends I treasure in my heart, thou wilt be one of the first, for thy truth has been tested, and has proved sterling. Farewell, kind Nanette! miles may divide us, and years may pass ere we again meet—I trust not; but I have recently too surely found, we cannot control circumstances: if such should be the case, you will still live as fresh in my memory as though we had parted but a few hours, and thy words were yet ringing in my ears, and thy pleasant smile still in my eyes."

"Heaven preserve you, sweet maiden!" returned Nanette, tears standing full in her eyes, and emotion rendering her voice almost inarticulate. "You will not be offended with me I am sure, if I say I part with you as I should with a very dear sister, whom fate denied I should ever look on again. I am very much obliged by your kind gift; not that I take it as a token of what I have been so fortunate as to have in my power to do, but because I can wear it next my heart as a remembrance of you; you, who have won my heart by your sweetness, your gentleness, your uncomplaining endurance of a captivity which would have made almost any one distracted; and would, however, churlish might have been my disposition, have made me act as kindly as I could if it had only been to return the very gentle-heartedness with which you treated me, making me feel so happy to be in your presence, and now to feel such regret at your departure. God bless you, and grant you every happiness your fondest wish can desire; and I sincerely pray you may never be subjected to such an evil as brought you to Exmoor; but if you should—"

"May I meet with another Nanette!" interrupted Violet, with a smile, pressing her hand affectionately.

"I didn't mean that exactly; I only pray that I may be there to wait upon you, and if not able to set you free, at least to do my best to—"

"Do as you have done," said Violet; "here you see is Flora, almost dying to say something to you, and thinking me, I know, very selfish for engrossing you all to myself. Is not that true, Flora?"

"I should like to tell Nanette how good I think she has been to us, and how dismal and dreary the place would have been without her, and how dreadfully terrified I should have been if it had not been for her attentions and explanations of all the horrid things in this most horrible place. Indeed, Nanette, I am not less grateful then Violet, nor will more easily forget your kindness than she has."

"I am sure of that," said Violet.

"Yes," continued Flora, "and I am only sorry I have no little trinket to give you—"

"If you had, it would not make me remember you with greater pleasure than I shall without having anything more than your sweet face and kind affectionate conduct to fix you upon my memory," returned Nanette, warmly.

"But I should like to give you a token that I too appreciate all your goodness to Violet, even more than to myself; I have but one little ornament with me—a ring, but—"

"Well?" said Violet, looking archly at her, observing her hesitate, and guessing the reason.

"Suppose, Nanette," continued Flora, not noticing the smile that lurked in the corners of Violet's mouth; "suppose Edric had given you any little keepsake before you were married, and he was to be far away from you, at a time when some one had rendered you a great service, would you part with that ornament to recompense those who had obliged you?"

"No, I would sooner die than give away that which he whom I loved had given me in remembrance of him; and if those from whom I had received kindness would not be content with the sincere thanks I should proffer them, I should think less of the kindness in remembering the motive which had induced them to show me favour. No, dear maiden, keep the ring, nor part with it while you live; those who lightly part with the gift of one whose heart they hold, however trifling and insignificant it may be in real value, would not hesitate to part with the heart too. I am fully repaid, as I have told you, by the kindness you have both shown me, and if the same circumstances were again to come to pass, I should be but too happy to do as much—if possible, more than I have done. God bless you both!"

A few more affectionate words passed on both sides, and then they parted with her, and mounted their steeds. As they only were waited for, directly they were both in the saddle they moved off, and with hearts from which an enormous weight had been removed, they left the dreary turret behind them, and wended their way through the more dreary forest. Not a word had been said to them respecting the deaths of Martin du Bois and Gualtier; and as Violet had such an instinctive horror of the former, she shrunk from even the mention of his name; and Flora was too elated at the thoughts of returning to London to cast a thought upon either.

Their journey was long, but done as quickly as the state of the roads and circumstances would permit, and at the expiration of a week they arrived safely in London. They found Halbert almost worn out by suspense and anxiety, and the meeting between him and Violet was affecting to both; but the gladness her presence and safety infused into him soon restored him to convalescence, and both he and Ethelbert took every precaution that she should not be liable to a similar violence. Ethelbert had but little trouble in obtaining possession of Leon de la Agnelet's property for Violet—the latter having made, some time previous to his death, arrangements in case of sudden decease—being without kindred that he was aware of—to invest with immediate possession of his wealth, whoever he might think fit to will it to; and when Ethelbert had accomplished this task, he placed it in the hands of trustees, and then once more they all prepared to start for Gloucestershire. Their preparations were soon made, and with Ulph and a new servant—for poor Gith it was, whom, in mistake for Ethelbert, Gualtier slew on the night Violet and Flora were carried off—they bade farewell to "Ye Sonne," and departed in search of Editha and Ghita.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh, search, ye chiefs, oh! search around!
* * * *
Three days, three sleepless nights, the Chief
For Oscar search'd." BYRON.

"For England!" SHAKSPERE.

"Even for that do I love you the more.
* * * *
Only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you." IBID.

THE protracted absence of Wat Tyler from the scene of gorgeous display, and of his duty, rather excited the surprise of Sir Walter Manny, who having noted his almost agitated manner when requesting leave of absence, and the furious speed with which he had galloped away when the permission was granted to him, had his curiosity roused, and when the sports of the day were drawing to a close, and Wat had not yet made his appearance, his surprise got the better of his patience, and beckoning Michael to his side, he said—

"Dost thou know where thy friend is tarrying?"

"No," replied Michael.

"Thou dost know whither and for what purpose he went when he quitted here?"

"Yes," replied Michael, being, unlike his usual character, rather taciturn.

"It is no secret, for Wat would have told me, but that he lacked time; what was it?"

"Why he has for some time suspected Bullfric to have some villanous designs upon the pretty maiden, Rubacelle; and as he withdrew himself so mysteriously from near this spot when you sent Wat on a message to the Earl of Derby, Wat concluded that he was up to mischief, and obtained leave from you to go after him."

"It is strange he has not yet returned."

"I've thought so these two long hours since. I'm afraid there's been some foul play, and if Wat has been the victim of it, I wouldn't give much for Bullfric's chance of living if I get near him. I should have been off to search after him long before this, but that he bade me keep to your side in case you should need my services."

"The sports are just at the close, and directly I gain Jacob von Artaveld's mansion, we will see what has become of him; but he will in all probability return before then."

"I hope he may; but if nothing had happened, he would have been here before this."

Michael was here interrupted by a sudden commotion visible in the train which surrounded Jacob von Artaveld, and by the hasty departure of the brewer himself, followed by a large number of retainers. Sir Walter Manny, attended by Michael, galloped after them, and soon overtook them, inquiring what had caused this abrupt quittal of the scene, and by chance laid hold of the fellow whom Wat had paid to watch the apartments, and who, fearing when discovered by our hero looking on at the feats of arms instead of performing the duty for which he had been hired, that he should be punished, had made his way back again to the brewer's dwelling as quick as he could, and had there found Wat's horse being held by the old deaf retainer, to whose care Wat had consigned him; a few questions put him in possession of all that had taken place during his absence, and he looked most anxiously, therefore, for Wat's reappearance. All this he told to Sir Walter, and continued,

"After waiting a terrible long while, and finding that he didn't come, I thought I would go up and see what had become of him, for I guessed by his setting me to watch the place that something wrong had occurred. I searched through all the apartments but the private ones, without seeing anything of him or the fellow he was after, and then passing close by the corridor which leads to the private wing, I listened if I could hear whether they were that way, and heard a low moaning. I stole cautiously and slowly along, and came upon the ante-room leading to the chamber where my master's daughter lies sick; the moaning was louder than ever, and finding the door wide open, I peeped in and then went across it, and there I saw the waiting woman lying murdered across the threshold—the daughter of our master moaning on a couch, and the whole room looking all confusion—"

"Was there none in it besides those you have mentioned?" asked Sir Walter, eagerly.

"No," replied the man; "and I ran off in great fright to our master, and told him all; you see the effect it has had upon him."

"I knew there had been some foul play," cried Michael, "and Bullfric has done it. Wat, however, is after him, and before this has made him smart for his rascality, I will wager my head—that is, if he has come up with him."

"Did you not, while at the door, see either of them pass out of the building?" asked Sir Walter.

"No," replied the man; "they must be in it somewhere. I left old Gabor still holding the young squire's horse when I came here."

"This is a strange matter indeed," exclaimed Sir Walter; "if the villain has defiled the maiden and slain Wat, he shall, if above ground, swing from the highest gallows a villain ever was appended to!"

"If he live to reach it," cried Michael, bitterly; "an' I get near him, I'll wait to treat him to no gallows, but hack him in pieces as I would a wolf."

"He shall not escape, depend upon it," said Sir Walter. "I see the departure of Jacob von Artaveld has been the signal for the rest to quit; I need therefore send no apology to the Earl of Derby, or to the nobles who are with him; follow me, Michael, and let us see what is to be done in bringing the truth of this matter to light."

Michael gladly obeyed, and they reached the mansion as soon as the brewer himself. They found their informant had not exceeded the truth, and it became a matter of speculation what had become of Rubacelle, Wat, and Bullfric. They had not passed out of the principal entrance, and every apartment was therefore searched; at the same time, men were despatched in all directions over the town to try and find some clue to them. When every room had been searched, recourse was had to questioning the daughter of Jacob von Artaveld, who, by the greatest exertions, had been restored to consciousness, to see if they could obtain from her any information which might give them some clue, however small, to discover what had become of the perpetrator of this vile outrage. Her story quite exonerated Wat, of whom the brewer had expressed some misgiving.

"I was lying upon the couch," said the exhausted girl feebly, "and the kind dear friend, Rubacelle, was by my side singing little sweet songs to me, when the door suddenly opened, and the husband of Katrine entered abruptly; he did not say one word, but ran up to Rubacelle, and seized her round the waist, and commenced dragging her away: she cried out for help, and asked him why he thus attacked her, but he did not reply—only kept dragging her away. I screamed as well as she, and my maid ran to her assistance, when, oh, heaven! I saw the horrible monster draw his dagger and stab my maid. I saw the blood come pouring out, and my eyes came over dim, and I recollect no more until I found myself still lying here, and the poor girl lying dead on the ground."

"Did you not see which way the villain dragged the maiden?" inquired her father.

"No," she replied, "I swooned before he quitted the room."

"Nor saw any one come to Rubacelle's assistance?"

"No; the sight would have made my heart leap for joy, and kept me from fainting," she exclaimed, earnestly.

This was the only intelligence she could give, and it afforded but little guide for them where to direct their search; once more every apartment, closet, corridor, or place likely to afford concealment, was explored without effect.

"You have other places of egress beside the principal one, have you not?" asked Sir Walter of the brewer, when they had finished their examination.

"Yes," returned Jacob von Artaveld; "they have all been examined, and were all bolted on the inside, therefore they could not have passed through them."

"Have you any vaults beneath the mansion?"

"Yes; but they could never have gone there, because there is no way of getting out by the way they entered."

"We will search them, nevertheless," returned Sir Walter. "Let some torches be kindled at once, and examine every cranny ere we give up the hope of discovering them."

Torches were brought, and a series of vaults were searched, but without discovering the fugitives, and the night passed away without ascertaining what had become of them.

The next morning the scouts returned without bringing any tidings of them. No vessel had left the canal since the affair had taken place, and they had searched every one without finding them; the gates of the city had been watched, and the country round scoured, but without obtaining the slightest information. That day passed away, and the next; still were they undiscovered. Michael grew almost distracted; he had never slept since they were missed, and looked like a ghost as he wandered about racking his brain to try and think of some means of finding out what had become of his dear friend and the maiden; he had found an earnest companion in his searches in Leowulf, who accompanied him everywhere, and spared neither labour nor fatigue in endeavouring to bring them to light. The third day passed, and all hope of discovering them was given up by those least concerned, for there were no means left untried, as they believed, to find them out; even the canal was dragged with a vain idea that Wat might have lost his life, and his body been cast in there, but the search was unsuccessful. The fourth day arrived; it was followed by the fifth, and still no intelligence; and then came the sixth, and Michael was still keeping up what might be termed a hopeless search. He resolved himself to look through every apartment in the mansion, if permitted; and as it was known what great friends he and Wat had been, the permission was given, although the request was deemed delusory. In this search, as in the others, Leowulf accompanied him, and when they came to the daughter's chamber, Michael pointed out the door through which Wat had followed Bullfric, and inquired whither it led, but was told that it was of no import, for they could not have gone that way because the door was shut when they searched the apartment.

"But was it fastened inside?" inquired Michael of the man who told them this, and who, having been one of those who had previously examined the apartments, had been ordered to accompany them in their search.

"Not that I remember," he replied; "I don't think we tried."

"Then I will!" cried Michael, quickly. "Come, Leowulf, there is hope yet; if this outlet has not been searched, we may yet light upon them."

"I hope we may!" said Leowulf; "but God help them, if they have had nothing to eat, we shan't find much life in them. Nature won't exist on hope, though it goes a good way to keep life and soul together in desperate straits."

"The more need of our haste: come, I feel sick until this passage is explored," exclaimed Michael, impatiently.

Leowulf shouldered his large sledge hammer, which he had brought with him with some indefinite idea that it might come in handy, and followed Michael, who led the way into the ante-chamber along the corridor, until they arrived at the stairs; they descended them, and arrived at the corridor, which contained passages branching off in several directions, and as some of them were dark, the man was despatched for a torch, with which he soon returned, and every one of them were in turn subjected to the closest inspection. At length they arrived at the one along which the imprisoned had really passed, and reached the stone steps, which descending, they found grew narrower each moment.

"This leads to subterranean passages," exclaimed Leowulf, "and there may be some strong doors to open by force; therefore do you return, good fellow, and bring to us whatever implements you can lay your hand on that will be of service to us," he added, addressing the retainer who attended them, and who, eager to communicate that a part had been discovered which had not been searched, hastened away to obey the request. Leowulf and Michael continued their progress down the stone steps until they reached the bottom, and went on until they were stopped by the iron door which had so effectually imprisoned Wat and Rubacelle. They tried to find where to open it——there was no indication of fastening but a massive lock, to which there was no key; they tried several times, by shaking it, to see if it would move, but it remained firm.

"This door closes with a spring," exclaimed Leowulf; "and I can see it has been so cunningly contrived that neither you nor I can find out where it is situated; but it must be a stronger door than this, that, with the aid of my heavy jack, could keep me out."

"You cannot break it open by—hark! listen! holy mother of God! I heard a footstep on the other side! Hist!"

They both held their breath, and soon they heard the slow approach of some one, and heard a voice low and faint trying to make itself heard. Michael knelt down and applied his mouth to the key-hole, exclaiming—

"Wat! Wat! is that you, Wat?" and then he placed his ear and heard, with the greatest difficulty, the voice reply—"

"It is—help, or we perish!"

"It is Wat, Leowulf!—it is him! although I scarce know his voice, it's so changed. Thank God! thank God!—batter the door down, Leowulf. Why how you stand and stare! batter the door down!—who knows but what he may perish while we stand talking here? Give me hold of the hammer—I feel as if I could break in the infernal door at a blow."

"I'll have a clear way to him soon enough, I'll warrant," cried Leowulf, energetically; "stand aside, Michael, and let me have a full swing for my arm: I'll have these hinges off, and then we may laugh at the spring, though it were the most cunningly devised in the world."

Michael stood aside and held the torch for Leowulf, who quickly made the passage echo with his heavy blows. He whirled the huge hammer round his head as though it was feather weight, and made it descend upon the hinge he was attacking with a force it was quite unequal to withstand. His blows rained so fast that he was not long in battering down the first hinge, and that once quite detached from the block to which it had been rivetted, he set to work at the other, which in its turn was also hammered to pieces, and then he tried to move the door: he succeeded in inserting the end of his hammer into the breach he had made, and in using it as a crow bar—Michael with right good will helping him to pull it; but although they tugged with all their strength, they did not move it more than an inch—still they had moved it, and again they tried, and again it moved a trifle. At this juncture the retainer arrived, followed by two more, each bearing some implement.

One of them carried a long iron bar, which was speedily made to take the place of the hammer, and the five pulling together, succeeded in making an opening barely wide enough for one to pass through; and the instant it was accomplished, Michael squeezed himself between it and looked eagerly for Wat: he was not there. He ran on, and in another minute he was in the vault, which, for six long days had been Wat and Rubacelle's dreary residence; a glance showed him Wat, making feeble efforts to raise up Rubacelle; but he was so terribly weak he had not sufficient strength to accomplish it. Michael sprung forward, he caught Wat, who was reduced to a shadow, in his arms, strained him to his breast, and wept like a child upon his shoulder. Leowulf arrived the next instant, and bidding Michael see to Rubacelle, took Wat's hand to give it a hearty shake of welcome, but it was cold and clammy, and, as Michael disengaged himself from his embrace, he perceived that he had fainted.

Leowulf lifted him up in his arms as if he was an infant, and carried him to the iron door, which the retainers had dragged open wide enough to allow any one to pass through easily. Michael followed him, bearing Rubacelle, who was also in a death-like swoon, and they soon gained the upper apartments, where they were each immediately carried to their own sleeping apartments, and placed in their respective beds; the most skilful leech in Ghent was immediately summoned, and when he arrived he was eagerly questioned as to their danger.

He gave every hope of their getting safely restored to health again with care and attention, and as there was no lack of that, a fortnight saw them both comparatively re-established in their pristine vigour. Wat gave to Sir Walter Manny and Jacob von Artaveld a full relation of all that had occurred, and the discovery of Bullfric's body attested his words. The existence of the range of vaults in which they were imprisoned was unknown but to two or three, although Bullfric would have led Wat to believe they were even frequented. The communication to them had long been disused, and when the previous search was made, they were not thought of by those who did know of their existence, and of course not by those who were not aware that the mansion possessed any such place; and thus, but for the perseverance of Michael, both Wat and Rubacelle must have perished.

The long expected arrival of King Edward being still protracted, and the position of military affairs making it necessary for Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Derby to be in constant communication with him, they were in the habit of sending messengers often; and as the leech had stated that Wat's original strength would be a long while ere it returned to him, unless he had the benefit of his native air, Sir Walter Manny generously determined that he should be the bearer of despatches to England; he knew how gladly

he would hail any opportunity of seeing Violet, and though it went to his heart, as he thought of the joy with which she would receive him, yet was his love for her so disinterested, so pure, that he would have gone out of his way to afford her such gratification, even though it rendered his love more hopeless than ever. He communicated his intention to Wat, and by the very grateful manner with which it was received, he thought that if he felt a pang, he had, at least, the consolation of giving happiness to two who were all the world to each other, and that helped to soften the sadness which, when he thought of her, would hang like a blight upon his spirit.

Wat joyfully prepared for his return to England, and, on communicating his good news to Michael, the sudden change he observed pass over his features, told him instantly that Michael esteemed it as exceeding ill news, unless he was to be his companion on the journey, and he was not long left in doubt, Michael most energetically making it understood that he could not be left behind and live; if Wat went to see Violet, he must go too, to see Flora: and, as this was one of the points upon which he would not hear reason, Wat gave up the attempt, and stated the case to Sir Walter, who laughed when he heard it; but, in the same generous spirit, gave him permission to accompany him, which Michael heard from Wat with a delight not to be described. Wat had scarcely got free from this dilemma, when he was placed in one he never calculated upon; he had made Rubacelle acquainted with his intended journey, and she had made no particular remark upon it at the time; but on the morning of the day upon which he was to start, he was seated alone in his chamber, when he was surprised by the rather abrupt entrance of a page; he immediately started to his feet, and the page timidly approached him with averted head. Finding the new comer did not speak, he addressed him, requesting to be made acquainted with the purport of his visit, and then the youthful stranger in reply threw back the capuchon, which almost enveloped the head, and disclosed, to his amazement, the features of Rubacelle.

"Holy Mother! Rubacelle!" he exclaimed, "and in this garb! What does this mean?"

"That—that if you will accept my services, I will accompany you to England as your page," replied Rubacelle, hesitatingly.

Wat felt as if his breath had been suddenly taken from him; he stared at her, and for a moment could not utter a word. At length, recovering himself, he said,—

"You cannot really intend this—yet it looks not like a jest—for Heaven's sake, Rubacelle! what could have induced you to take this extraordinary step?"

"I could not bear the thoughts of being left alone," she replied.

"Alone!" he reiterated; Katrine will be with you."

"No," she replied; "she yesterday entered a convent with the intention of taking the veil."

"Still, Rubacelle, there are others with whom you would be more happy—far more happy than you will be if you persist in your present intention?"

"Oh, no! indeed there are none here who could compensate me for your loss."

"Rubacelle!"

"I speak the language of my heart, Wat—it is truth. Why should I disguise aught from you, who stood on the verge of death for me, and with me. There should be no disguise between us; there is no one now in the whole world I have to look to as a friend but you, and if the world, wide as it is, was peopled with kindred of mine, I should esteem none equal to you, who have been so generous, so noble in your deeds to me. Have you not won my deepest gratitude? Have you not earned my sincerest esteem? Should any cold, worldly consideration keep me from showing you how on my heart is impressed your worth? Can I forget that for me, a stranger, you hazarded life, when first you saw me? Can I forget when in the dreary vault, and the last long, long day had arrived, when there was no hope of deliverance, and we almost prayed for the death that was stealing over us, that you made me eat the last morsel of bread, and drink the last drop of wine, when you knew there was no more within reach, and felt a strong conviction that no succour was near—none, none—and smiled and talked, feebly as your weakness made it, as though we should soon escape, and all to keep up my spirits—to make me cheerful, when I knew at the same moment that desolation and black despair were fixed with iron fangs upon your heart? Can I forget this? Can I help loving you? You start—have I done wrong in confessing this? Ah, Wat, if you were my brother, I might, without fear of compromising maidenly reserve, tell you as much; and have you not been as a brother to me? Could any brother have done more—have been more affectionate, more devoted than you have? And what consideration should hold me from acknowledging that I would gladly repay your goodness with the worship of my whole heart? Do not shake your head and look so sad at me; did you not say that if a maiden formed an attachment for one worthy of her, she would do right in loving him, in defiance of all opposition?"

"But—"

"Nay, do not throw a doubt now upon what you then so earnestly affirmed. You told me that love was raised independent of the will—even John Chandos, in speaking of La belle Genifrede, said—Oh, I noted every word—that her love for his cousin, Alaric, was so entire, she was ready to go all over the world with him—was ready to sacrifice home, family, friends, every tie that bound her to her birth-place! Why should I hesitate to acknowledge that I possess the same feeling for you, who have done so much more to gain my love than he did for her? Do not think me forward or unmindful of what is becoming a maiden in speaking thus? But this is no time for reserve with you, Wat; look at my position—without one relative in the world to counsel or protect me; without a friend but you, to whom I can appeal for guidance and companionship, what could I do when you were gone? I would rather have yielded up my breath in that dungeon, with you by my side to have received my last sigh, then be left when you are far away. Do not deny my request; I shall break my heart if you refuse; but you will not, I know—you are far too generous, too kind, to say me nay, when you know how very, very happy your consent would make me."

When she had concluded, and with clasped hands was looking him earnestly in the face, he laid his hand gently on her shoulder, and with a countenance that told that he was fearful that what he was about to say would give her pain, he said—

"Would my consent to your accompanying me give you any pleasure, however trifling, I should be but too happy to give it freely; but as your request is coupled with an acknowledgment, which, however flattering, has pained me—"

"Pained you?" exclaimed Rubacelle, quickly.

"You shall judge. Supposing I had made a confession to you, similar to the one your kind and guileless nature prompted you to make to me, and it had been your fate to have been brought up from child-

hood, from infancy, with one whom as a child you had loved, a love which had grown up with you, and you had continued heart in heart, as you walked hand in hand, even to a time—"

"I understand you," faintly interrupted Rubacelle, turning pale as death—"you love another?"

"Even so," replied Wat in a low tone; "one no less fair, or kind, or gentle, than yourself; one with whom I stood an infant at my mother's knee, who was my lode-star as I grew older, and whom now I love as dearly as it is possible for man's nature to permit."

Rubacelle had turned away her head as he proceeded, and it gradually drooped until at length she burst into tears and sunk on a chair which stood near; for a few minutes she wept passionately, and Wat felt a pang so bitter pass through his heart, he was unable to say a word to cheer her. At length, when the paroxysm had passed away, she lifted up her head, and rose up and went towards him: she took his hand, and though her eyes were yet filled with tears, she smiled placidly, and said—

"I ought to have known that there were others who were more worthy of your love than I, and I regret that my heedless confession should have given you pain, as I know it must; but pardon me, Wat, I did it not intentionally. And now, that I am acquainted with your sentiments, I still prefer my request—you will guard me as a sister, and I shall be with you, and will wait upon or serve her you love, and will love her too, and will do anything to make you or her happy, if you will grant my request, and will never speak of my foolish love again, more than to show I can never forget your constant kindness to me—never, never!"

It was in vain that Wat tried to dissuade her—she had resolved to go; and proved that she had spoken nought but truth, when on her journey to Ghent, she had said, "No inducement could make her break a resolution she had once decidedly formed." Gentle in most things, she was obstinate in this; and Wat at length, on finding persuasion useless, consented that she should accompany him; and, to Michael's surprise, she came on board the vessel, habited in her page's attire, with Wat, who, having having received his despatches, lost no time in departing. A fair wind soon wafted them over to England, and after a short absence they once more placed their feet upon their native soil. Wat immediately proceeded to King Edward, who, in consequence of a handsome letter from Sir Walter Manny, received him graciously, and gave him a week's grace, while despatches were preparing for him to return with to Sir Walter. He gladly availed himself of this leave to set out for Brenchley; he was accompanied by Michael and Rubacelle, and when they were within a mile or two of their birth-place, passing through the wood, both Wat and Michael gradually increased their speed, while Rubacelle followed slowly on, and they soon arrived at the opening at the outskirts of the wood, and the little village burst upon their sight, looking as it looked when last they gazed upon it from that spot. It was evening, and everything was calm and still, and they reined in their steeds, and remained almost motionless, their eyes fixed upon the sweet little place most earnestly: neither spoke a word; but when Rubacelle arrived they quitted the spot, and proceeded to ascertain what changes had occurred during the few months they had been away.

END OF BOOK II.

WAT TYLER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROBIN HOOD."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

"Make me to see it; or (at the least) so prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge, nor loop
To hang a doubt on: or woe upon thy life."
OTHELLO.

"Help, masters, help!
* * * *
How now! what's the matter?"
TAMING THE SHREW.

"It were much better to be wed or dead,
Than wear a heart a woman loves to rend."—BYRON.

"Sir Walter Manny, a week after these challenges had been sent, when he imagined the King of France had received them, collected about forty lances on whom he knew he could depend, and rode through Brabant night and day * * He would be the first that would enter France, and take some castle or strong town, and perform some gallant deeds of arms." FROISSART'S CHRONICLES.

"Around his bright banner
Swords sprang from the sheath;
And the words of their war-cry
Were 'victory or death!'"
ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

THERE are few, if any, anticipations so bright as those in which we indulge on our return to home after a first or a long absence—there are assuredly none brighter. It is true, mixed with them are fears that the unsparing hand of death may have laid some favourite friend low, but the hope which softens the aspect of all evils is ever at hand to suggest that they may have escaped and be at the old familiar place to welcome us back again. There are pleasant dreams which present themselves thickly as we draw nearer home, of the smiling faces, of the extended hands, the warm fervent words of affectionate greeting, the joyous and impassioned embrace, and the delightful enjoyment of being able to tell all we have seen, encountered, and endured—making kind and attentive eyes open wide with wonder, and our own heart glow to see the interest taken in all we say and do; and then comes our turn—having the equal satisfaction of learning all that has transpired during our absence, noting the changes, wondering at some things, and in others appealing to memories of our old prophecy that it would come to pass.

There comes, too, other anticipations no less bright than those mentioned, which every one, more or less, look forward to be realised with strong hopes and beating hearts; and, as mile after mile is passed over, making the distance between expectation and exemption from doubt less and less, every item is gone over again and again, until the excitement becomes almost too much for the mind to sustain; although hope, with its sweet influence, never deserts its post, and is ever ready to smooth away a doubt or fear by some sanguine suggestion.

The expectation of finding persons and things as we left them, in spite of a little common-sense reasoning to the contrary, clings strongly to us, and makes one of the principal charms in the fond ideas we give birth to about "the old house at home." But where is a disappointment keener than that, which comes like a knife to the heart, of discovering, upon reaching the home about which we have cherished such bright imaginings, such sanguine speculations, that there is scarce one expectation realized—of finding all things changed—so changed that even surmises, however gloomy, could not have foretold it? It is a bitter trial for the spirit; and there are many who left home in youth, have been separated from it years, but have, with those years upon their head, retained the freshness of their youth, and with it come back to the old spot where their happiest hours were passed, have found scarce a trace left of all that had once so much delighted them—and been, at that one discovery, impressed with the saddening weight of years which hope had kept from making the smallest mark. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

These remarks, to a certain extent, applied to the feelings with which Michael and Wat entered Brenchley again. In the brief term of their absence they had seen much, which made the time since they had quitted England appear considerably longer than it really was, and the motives which both had to visit the village made them most eager to be once more in its precincts. They galloped their horses until they arrived at Wat's home. He there, instead of meeting

with his father and his dear mother, learned they were sojourning at Halbert Evesham's late abode.

The servant, who did not recognize Wat or Michael in their military garb, did not explain the reason, and Wat, with a fear that the illness of Violet or Halbert might be the cause, spurred his steed, and started for the dwelling, followed closely by Michael and Rubacelle. A few minutes brought them to the door, and an instant scarce elapsed ere Wat was folded in his mother's embrace; and as it so happened that Michael's mother was there, he was not a jot behind Wat in following his filial example. After the first emotions created by their meeting had subsided, a few words put them in possession of the departure of Violet, Flora, Halbert, and Ethelbert.

When they heard it, Wat's chagrin was excessive, and poor Michael's disappointment was terrible; of all the misgivings, and they were not few, the latter entertained respecting the changes which might have occurred while he was absent, and which might greet him with something like disappointment upon his return, he never calculated upon Flora being away—away, too, upon a journey, which in its length and duration so far exceeded the limits of his leave, that there was no prospect of being able to follow her and be back again within the time granted him, or that if he remained all his time in Brenchley, that she would or could return and meet him. He stood aghast when he heard of her absence, and could scarce find a word to reply to the many fond and anxious questions which his mother poured upon him; he felt his disappointment most keenly, and could not help displaying it.

Wat, who was quite aware of Ethelbert's intended departure in search of his wife and Violet's parents, had never for one moment supposed that Violet would accompany him; but had understood she would remain in Brenchley until the discovery of her parentage had been made beyond the possibility of a doubt, and that then she would be placed in their arms. He was not less disappointed than Michael, that she, 'the adored of all,' was far away; but he kept within his breast his feelings, bitter as they were, that his mother, who was very sensitive, might not think there existed any one in the world he would have been more glad to have seen than herself. She, however, knew every turn of his features, every intonation of his voice, and every expression of his eye too well, had so often dwelled fondly and anxiously upon their variations, that his apparent cheerfulness and calmness with which he heard her intelligence, did not deceive her; she could detect his wandering eye, as it roamed over the place, and for a moment settled, as a butterfly upon a flower, on some little object that had been prized by *her*, to be off again and alight upon another. She noted, too, that he replied mechanically to several questions she had put to him, evidently without having heard a word addressed to him; and gathered that if his regret was less exhibited, it was no less poignant than Michael's. She could perceive, too, his motive for striving to suppress it, and if there could have been a warmer inclining of the heart towards him than that she already possessed, his conduct on this occasion would have produced it; and in order to make some little return she spoke frequently and fondly of Violet to him, and never did he think words fell sweeter from his mother's lips upon his ear than when she was uttering those kind things of her.

Brenchley, however, now she was away, was no place for him; and although his return, when made known, brought him plenty of smiling faces and friendly hands to welcome him, he would but stay the day subsequent to his arrival; and the following morning, accompanied by Michael and Rubacelle, returned to London. He had understood that Violet and her companions would take London in their way, and with a latent idea that he might find out the house where they had sojourned on their arrival, and hear something respecting them, he determined to pass the remainder of the time allowed him, if possible, in visiting the places where she had recently been.

Rubacelle, too, was disappointed in not having met with Violet; for she had set her heart upon seeing one who it appeared had gained Wat's love so completely and entirely, and she longed to have an opportunity of displaying her devotion to him, by offering every attention and kindness she could to her; she thought, too, she might learn from her better how to gain the way to his heart—not that she wished to deprive Violet of one iota, but she desired most earnestly to do all in her power to make him happy, or add to his happiness, by any little acts that would tend to it without compromising her self-respect; and she thought by studying Violet's conduct to him, and to a certain extent imitating it, she should accomplish her wishes, and make him the happiest, as she believed him to be the most deserving, being in existence.

She was very young, and her heart was full of generous tenderness, an enthusiasm of gratitude too much like love to be trusted. He had won it all, and in her warm estimation he was deserving of having her whole life devoted to him; and when she conceived this, she resolved to undertake it, and in defiance of every other consideration, carry it into execution. He was her idol, she lived for him alone, and would not see that another loving him as well as herself—she did not think it possible—and he returning that love, was any reason whatever why she should not love him too, and serve him, and by the most affectionate services evince as strongly as might be that she had not forgotten she owed life and honour, every thing, to him.

There was a feeling of disappointed curiosity, too, mixed up with her regret at not having seen Violet; she had wondered many times since she had learned of her existence, what description of person she could be; she thought at least she must be very beautiful for *him* to love her, and could not but believe, too, that her manners and disposition must be very sweet and gentle, and, indeed, pictured her in her imagination as nearly as possible to what she really was; she therefore, scarcely less regretted her absence than Wat, or than Michael did that of Flora. She, however, said nothing, and listened to Michael's frequent outbursts of chagrin, very slightly drawing forth consolatory remarks from Wat without remark, and when she saw the latter look dull and oppressed with heavy thoughts, strove to the best of her ability to cheer him, by changing their current, and leading him to such subjects as were calculated to restore him to his usual spirits—a task of kindness in which she most affectionately persevered.

The day after their arrival in London, they were passing through Chepeside, and as they reached the hostel, "Y^e^ Sunne," Michael suddenly exclaimed—

"Look there, Wat! is not that Gith, Halbert Evesham's serving man?"

Wat looked in the direction in which he pointed, and the next instant he drew up his steed near the door, alighted, and walking up to the man, perceived that Michael had been mistaken in the person, but not in the habiliments, and he said, hastily—

"You wear the dress of a serving man whose master I am now in search of; can you tell me aught of him?"

The question was rather ambiguous, and the insinuation conveyed would have been deemed impertinent, but that a squire had asked it, one who was supposed to visit with summary punishment any want of courtesy on the part of an inferior; and such was the estimation in which chivalry was held, that all these probationary knights were looked upon as fire-eaters, whose words were swords, and looks daggers; the man whom Wat addressed, therefore, though he reddened, swallowed his ire, and looking his questioner in the face, with as good an assumption of innocence of the purport of the question as he could assume, said—

"I do not understand you."

"The dress you now wear," repeated Wat, without perceiving how he was reducing the man's pride to shreds, "was lately the property of a serving man who attended an old and dear friend of mine. I am conscious of his having visited London, but cannot ascertain what part; your appearance in this dress leads me to believe it was here, or if not, that you can tell me where they stayed while they were in London. You will do well not to trifle with me; I can swear to the dress, and unless you give me the information I require, I will have a clear understanding of how you became possessed of those habiliments."

The man's pride, he had but little—he was a drawer or waiter, and it is an established fact that waiters have every vestige of it banished before they can become eminent in their calling—had oozed out as Wat kept harping upon the dress, and by the time he had finished it had quite disappeared. He was speedily conscious to whom Wat was alluding; but as it would not become a waiter to give up any piece of intelligence without impressing the person upon whom he was bestowing it with a full idea of its value, he shook his head with an appearance of doubt and reflection, and after fretting Wat by a minute's provoking silence, affecting to be calling upon his memory, he at length said—

"Did the worshipful gentleman have any parties with him?"

"Yes," replied Wat, "he had a brother, two females, and a servant, whose dress you—"

"Exactly," interrupted the man; "you have said so before."

"Were they here?" cried Wat, stamping his foot impatiently, and making the man's heart leap suddenly into his mouth.

"Ye—yes—yes," replied the man, quickly, "and a great stir they made; the young ladies were carried off, and the servant whose dress I wear was murdered; that, in fact, is the way the dress was mine—it took my fancy, being—"

"What is all this you are telling me?" cried Wat, looking as if he had been stunned.

"Why I say I took a liking for the dress, and offered—"

"I mean, fool, are you speaking truth in telling me the two maidens were carried off by violence, and Gith murdered?"

"Oh, you know his name, I see."

"Wretch, answer me without circumlocution, or I'll strangle you where you stand."

"What is the matter, Wat?" cried Michael, overhearing Wat's angry words, dismounting, and hastily approaching the spot. Wat told him—Michael's eyes opened immensely—he seemed quite staggered, but recovering himself, he seized the drawer by the throat, and echoing Wat's words, asked fiercely if he spoke the truth.

"Ask my master, else!" replied the man, trying to get free—having some horrid visions of experiencing Gith's fate floating before his eyes. "Ha! there's Nat Nuttles; he can tell you so, he's had cause to remember it! Hoy! Nat Nuttles! Nat Nuttles here!"

Nat Nuttles, who had been standing surveying the actors in this scene, upon hearing himself called, approached, but it was the sort of air with which a school boy approaches his master when he perceives him flourishing his stick preparatory to its forcible descent upon its sides, or the step of the delinquent at school, who sees his master reach the cane and gives it a swish to try its elastic powers, having his eye fixed upon him during the process, and at the same time addresses him with a meaning nod of the head and the command which means so much of "Come up here, sir." Nat's first impression was, that the drawer called upon him for assistance, a request which he deemed the height of absurdity—he might as well have been asked to swallow Wat and Michael both at a mouthful; he had a kind of intuitive perception, that when two dogs fight and a third interferes, it is not an uncommon thing for the intruder to get by far the worst of the fray; he, therefore, was shy of putting his nose where it was likely to be snapped off—besides, he had not recovered from the thrashing Gualtier had administered to him, and he was chary of incurring a like discipline. He, therefore, advanced at a very hesitating pace, and tried to make himself appear so amiable, to look such a lamb, that he succeeded in being at a glance taken for a goose, and of setting aside any desire to pounce upon him with the intention of maltreating him, he rubbed his hands together, and bowing, said, in a voice which flew up from the bass into the falsetto every second word,—

"I think one of you gallant gentlemen called me."

"I did," cried the waiter, whom Michael suffered to get free when Nat Nuttles spoke. "Wasn't two maidens, who stayed here with their father and uncle, carried off one night by force, and wasn't their servant slain?"

"You speak the truth," said Nat Nuttles.

"How do you know?" cried Wat, addressing him.

"Why he ought to know," exclaimed the drawer, "for he was rarely cudgelled by one of the villains, and he roused the apprentices up, who gave them good chase—didn't you, Nat?"

As it all of a sudden struck Nat that Wat and Michael might be two of the party who perpetrated the outrage, he thought it would be scarcely politic to confess to the last assertion of the drawer, Durth; so, with a smile which was accompanied by a very searching glance at the hands of our two friends, to see if they conveyed any hint of their owners' intentions, he said,—

"Truly, I was very hardly used; but may I ask what is the object of these noble and gallant warriors seeking to become acquainted with this matter; has Government heard of it, taken it up, and despatched them to learn all the particulars? Excuse my boldness in asking the question."

"You shall neither be excused anything!" cried Wat, impetuously; "I'll search this matter out: by the equivocation which you both use, I suspect that you both connived at this villany you speak of; if you have, you shall smart most handsomely for your knavery."

"Aye," cried Michael, seizing hold of Nat Nuttles suddenly, "this matter shall at once be all disclosed; and if they were carried off, and you but in thought assisted in the deed, I'll squeeze your miserable life out before I take my fingers from your throat."

"Oh! oh!" shouted Nat, twisting and struggling beneath Michael's firm grasp; "come, take your hands

off me—you let go now, will you? I hadn't anything to do with it; they beat me to a jelly, and I set all the apprentices on their heels."

"I'll be satisfied of this," cried Michael, keeping a tight hold.

"And so you can; the drawer knows I did," cried Nat Nuttles, "you heard him say so, and the host too. Here, host! Hey, Simon Sylvester, good Simon Sylvester, ho! Come, I say, you let go; you are hurting me so—I won't run away."

"How now! what's all this brawling about?" exclaimed the host of Yᵉ Sunne, suddenly poking his head from the entry, roused by the hubbub from the discussion of some ale which he had in vain tried to get equal in flavour to that he quaffed when Leon de la Agnelet so liberally enriched it with Malmsey.

He was immediately answered by the four addressing him at the same moment with a tolerable strength of lungs, each striving above the other to make himself heard, while the little host gazed upon them in complete bewilderment, without being able to gather a word to elucidate this strange uproar; several passers-by began to assemble, and Wat was soon aware that they were becoming the subject of wonder and open-mouthed inquisitiveness. He therefore bade the host enter his house, and giving his steed in charge to a loiterer, he beckoned Rubacelle to alight, and then making the drawer go into the hostel before him, followed closely, while Michael brought in Nat Nuttles.

To avoid the chance of being intruded upon while this matter was being investigated, they went into a chamber above—the one which had been occupied by Halbert Evesham while he was there—and sought a full explanation of the whole matter; but as this was done at the top of their voices, any one outside of the apartment would have been justified in believing that a fierce and furious brawl was taking place, and that there was not a minute between it and an appeal to force of arms; it is scarcely, therefore, surprising, that Lucy and Cecilia, the host's daughters—who had from an upper window seen Wat and Michael alight, had heard the uproar, and found it grew nearer, until it reached a chamber beneath them, and there proceeded with a vigour which every moment appeared to increase—should, rather alarmed, have descended from their chamber, opened the door of the room containing the loud talkers, and presented themselves, with the idea of being able to prevent any of the disputants coming to blows. The moment they appeared, every one, save Rubacelle, jumped to their feet—the host, outrageous at their coming where there were soldiers—the drawer and Nat Nuttles because they would make good witnesses—and Wat and Michael, for at the first glimpse visions of Violet and Flora crossed them.

"How now, what do you here, jades?" roared Simon Sylvester. "Away with ye!"

"We were afraid you were quarrelling," exclaimed Lucy, having a good stare at Wat.

"Away with ye, hussies!" shouted the host.

"No, no!" cried Nat Nuttles and the drawer together.

"They know all about the young ladies," continued the drawer; "they waited on them when they came back."

"Came back!" echoed Wat; "when were they brought back? who brought them back?"

"Are you speaking of the maiden called Violet Evesham, and her friend Flora?" asked Lucy quickly.

"Yes!" exclaimed Wat and Michael in a breath.

"Oh, we can tell you every bit about it; can't we, *Cissy?" said Lucy.*

"Audacious jades, do ye hear what I tell ye?" cried the host, foaming with rage at observing the two girls laughing and looking so delightedly at the young warriors; "away with ye both this instant, or I'll make ye both bitterly repent it, I will!"

"Nay!" cried Wat, "not until we hear all that they have to tell us. Approach, my pretty damsels, and be not alarmed at our boisterous manner—we will do you no hurt; there is much importance in our ascertaining all that befel the maidens of whom we are speaking, and we are therefore naturally very anxious to learn all we can."

"Oh, I know all about it," said Cecilia, "because one of the maidens, Flora, told me every bit about it; how dreadfully alarmed she was, and how glad she was to get safely back here again—"

"Pray sit down and let us hear it all at once," exclaimed Michael, eagerly. "I shall not be able to rest easy for one minute if I don't hear all the affair as quick as it can be told."

Much to the chagrin of the host, the maidens seated themselves, the rest following their example, and Cecilia related all the incidents with which the reader is acquainted, winding up by saying—

"I knew that the handsome Chevalier would not have behaved so of himself. I knew it was some wicked detestable wretch that had worked him up to do it, didn't you, Lucy?"

"Oh, I was sure of it," replied Lucy. "I said so, you know, and then to think that he should be killed, too, in that dreadful way; poor dear fellow! how we cried when we heard of it, didn't we, Cissy?"

"Yes, ready to cry our eyes out; and I am sure father is sorry now he behaved so rudely to him, ai'nt you, father?"

"I'm sorry I didn't pack you both off to the nunnery of St. Ursula, as I threatened," roared the host, in a tremendous rage. "To your chambers, you shameless jades; I'll keep you on bread and water for a month—I'll make your confessor impose a penance, a rigorous penance on you—I'll—"

"Nay, never fume so, man!" cried Wat, stopping him in the midst of his passionate ebullition, "the maidens have uttered no treason."

"No," exclaimed Michael, "it only shows the kindness of their disposition."

"Yes," cried the host, "rather too much of it; don't stay giggling here, you impudent baggages—do as I bid you."

"Wait a moment longer," exclaimed Michael. "Did Flora say anything more than you have told me?"

"She said that she was afraid of going the journey she has now gone," said Cecilia; "because they had to pass through a large forest, where there were robbers and quantities of wolves, and she longed to be once more in the little village where she was born, with somebody, she knew who—"

"I know who too," cried Michael, with a laugh.

"Will you tell me?" she cried, laughing, rising and approaching Michael with rather a coaxing manner, at which the host, unable to restrain his passion, sprung to his feet, and turned her and her sister out of the room; but not until they both had wished Wat and Michael a kind farewell, and, to spite their father, kissed their hands to them, as he pushed them from the apartment. When he returned he said—

"Now, young sirs, you have obtained all the information respecting your friends which we can give you, is there any refreshment you need? If there is, my house being a hostel, you shall have it; if not, take your departure at once, and I don't hesitate to tell you, I shall be glad to see your backs."

"I need no refreshment," exclaimed Wat, laughing and rising up. "Do you, Michael?"

"No," replied he.

"Nor do you, I suppose?" said Wat, addressing Rubacelle, who gave a silent shake of the head; "but you may bring some for yourself, your attendant, and your friend here; there is a merk to meet its expense, and you shall also have the satisfaction of immediately seeing our backs."

As Wat finished his words, he threw down a merk, and led the way out of the room, followed by Michael and Rubacelle: they mounted their steeds and were just departing, when they heard the rapid clapping of a pair of hands together; they turned their eyes up to a window from whence the sound appeared to proceed, and saw the hosts two fair daughters kissing their hands to them, and laughing, with every appearance of being exquisitely delighted that they had the opportunity of thus attracting the attention of three such handsome-looking youths—for Rubacelle being clad in her page's garb was, of course, included in their salute; it was returned by Wat and Michael; Rubacelle, however, who thought, that as strangers to Wat and Michael, they were very forward in acting thus, did not return the salute, and followed the youths in silence until they reached their quarters.

Wat could not but feel very uneasy as he revolved the particulars of the adventure which had befallen Violet and Flora in his mind, and could he have gained from Edward a permission for a longer stay, nothing would have prevented him following them to Gloucestershire; but as it was hopeless to expect it, however strongly he might urge his request, he was compelled, with a prayer to Providence for her safety, to rest, we can hardly say contented, with a hope that she would meet with no more misadventures during her journey; but discovering who were her parents, be rendered in all things as happy as he could most earnestly wish her.

Michael did not take it so coolly as Wat; he had less confidence in Flora than Wat had in Violet, and he could not help fancying that she had given, in the first instance, some encouragement to the gallant, and he had presumed upon it to carry them off. There was no telling how much of the truth he had heard, and the flightiness of Flora, which had induced him to quit his home, recurred vividly to him every time he thought of the adventure. She had in the first instance shaken his confidence, and it was a hard matter now for him to believe that more had not happened than what he had heard.

It is too frequently the practice of young ladies, by way of teasing their lovers, for fun, as they term it, to laugh and flirt with other men, and tell of flirtations which *never took place*—forgetting all the while there is such a thing as believing the old proverb, that 'many a true word is spoken in jest,' and that a man's trust in a woman, his faith once shaken, his confidence in her truthfulness once undermined, it can *never* be restored to its original basis, either by her, let her act as cautiously as she may, or by him, strive as he will. The first doubtful circumstance in which some unfortunate mischance may place her, however innocent she may be, she will find it no easy matter to make him believe that she is totally so.

In spite of himself, the remembrance of previous lightness will arise—her own confession of it, though perhaps untrue, and uttered only for the *fun* of seeing him jealous, will flash like lightning through his memory—his faith in her is broken, and he cannot, inclined as he may be to do so, believe her guiltless. How many have parted from circumstances like this! Many who were much attached to each other, who could, and in all probability would, have made each other happy. For the gratification of an idle and reprehensible whim, many a maiden has lost her position in the heart of one she really loved, and yet, if actually put to the proof, would have parted with life rather than have forfeited it.

There is a species of amusement in which boys in the country indulge—they insert a pin through a beetle, to which they have given the name of "a spinner," and watch its frantic and agonised gyrations with the most exquisite enjoyment; they call it *fun*; but let the ladies answer whether, if that beetle could live after it had been subjected to such torment, and had thoughts and perceptions such as we have, it would regard with eyes of admiration, or hearts disposed to affection, those who had so tormented it; or whether, having once suffered from their *fun*, it could ever place dependence on the inflictors, however kindly they might subsequently act? They have inflicted the pain once, what security is there that they will not again?

And so do men feel towards those women who have passed the barb through their heart, and found pleasure—at least fun—in perceiving the agony they endure during the exercise of their pleasantry.

Did any girl or woman ever find a man who loved her enough to be jealous, if she made him so, have ever the same confidence in her after, which he had previous to her attempts to create doubts in him? Yet who feels suspicion more keenly than woman?—than she who brought it upon herself? Let women understand this axiom, and apply it to their actions, that if it is worth while to have a man's affection, there is no fun on earth worth while to shake his trust, his entire faith in her.

Michael fretted and doubted, and quarrelled with himself for doubting, and almost at the same time vowed he would never see her more—that he would forget her, and had a great mind to break through all discipline, and follow her to Gloucestershire to tell her so; and yet she was really innocent, and merited no such harsh thoughts: it was the result and the punishment of her weak thoughtlessness.

Wat, who possessed considerable influence over Michael's mind, had very great difficulty in persuading him that she was not to blame, that he did wrong in indulging in such ideas; and it was only at last that, by dint of argument, and striving to convince him that the fact of her having been with Violet would have prevented her committing herself, that he brought him back to anything like reason and contentment; he could not forget her flirtations with the villagers, or with Rupert, and the remembrance would mix itself with every attempt he made to believe she was innocent of all blame.

The week which Edward had granted them soon passed away; and Wat, not now having any motive for remaining in London, was not sorry, at the expiration of his time, to receive an order to wait upon the King and receive his despatches; he obeyed, and they were placed in his hands with strict injunctions to deliver them into the hands of Sir Walter Manny with his best speed. A fast vessel was provided for him, and he went with his two companions on board, and after a short voyage they were landed at Antwerp, and then proceeded to Ghent, where they found matters nearly as they had left them.

Among those who came to welcome their return was John Chandos, who, after a desultory conversation, and working his subject in a very round-about way, at length begged of Wat to tell him what had become of Rubacelle; she had, he said, disappeared at the same time he went to England, and he wished to

know whether she had accompanied him, and wound up by confessing that, somehow or other, he felt a great love for her, and that if he knew where he could meet with her he would tell her so, and make her an offer of his hand and heart. Wat felt himself rather awkardly situated—he scarce knew what to reply, but at length said that she was still in Ghent, but desired her abode kept secret; he would, however, convey to her any message he might favour him with and bring him back a faithful reply. John Chandos was some time ere he could frame a message to his satisfaction, and at last came to the conclusion only to request an interview with her, to relate some matters of importance, and trust to his own tongue to plead his cause.

Wat did as he requested, and went to Rubacelle, who had, upon Wat's persuasion, agreed to remain as a boarder at the convent in which Katrine was undergoing her probation to enter, until a war with France compelled him to leave Ghent.

When he delivered his message, she inquired if he knew the nature of the communication John Chandos wished to make; but he evaded it, and as he perceived a reluctance upon her part to grant it, he endeavoured to persuade her to comply. She was not backward in the shrewdness natural to women, and with little difficulty guessed why the bold squire wished to see her; but as Wat seemed desirous that she should meet him, and hear what he had to say, she consented. Wat bore to John Chandos the consent, and the time appointed for their meeting, which though he was delighted to hear, yet he could not help acknowledging there was a strange sensation of timidity—of don't-likeishness; but as it must be got over, he made up his mind to it, and resolved to get through it as gallantly as he could.

"If I could manage it as easily and comfortably," said he to Wat, "as my cousin Alaric did, I would not much mind the beginning; but I feel afraid that if I go down upon my knees she won't raise me up, throw her arms about my neck, and tell me she loves me with all her heart: I can't expect it, for I have not known her so long as Alaric did La Belle Genifrede, but I love her as well. Now if she will only give me a little encouragement—just help me on a bit, I shall be able to say all I've got to say pretty tolerably; but if she don't, why I shall break down—shall stammer out every word; perhaps frighten her, and make myself look like a fool."

Wat said all he could to encourage him, but declined, though requested by both to accompany him; and John Chandos departed with rather a palpitating heart to try, for the first time, his hand at love-making. In about a couple of hours he returned to Wat's quarters, and by the expression of his face Wat could perceive the ill-success he had met with; he looked pale and dispirited, and he threw himself into a chair, without for a few minutes being able to utter a word. At last, after a few words from Wat, who scarcely knew what to say, he exclaimed in a voice which trembled with emotion —

"It's all over, Wat—it's all over; neither her heart nor her hand are for me. I confess I did not expect it—I don't know why, but I never had a thought about her saying no; but she did say so, and it came as though a smith had hit me with his sledge upon my heart; I think I know why she said so—I know why, I'm sure."

"Did she tell you?" asked Wat, eagerly.

"No, but I can guess. The rascality of the knave, Bullfric, and the rogues who were his companions when they broke into her father's house, have turned her quite against all the male kind. I'm sure of that, and its lucky for him he's dead, or I'd give him cause to repent making me suffer this bitter disappointment."

"What makes you entertain this idea?" asked Wat.

"Why, she said she'd never marry—never, never—and then tears came into her eyes; and would she have done that, if it had not been that she'd received such ill treatment at the hands of one of the sex, so that she was afraid to trust herself in the power of another? I know I'm right; it was unfortunate, though, that I was not able to say half that I had made up my mind to say. You must know, as I went along, I strung together a lot of pretty speeches which I should say in answer to what I expected she would observe to me; some of them were what my cousin, Alaric, said to La Belle Genifrede, and he found them very successful; so I thought they would have been for me, but I had no opportunity of saying any of them."

"Why not?" asked Wat.

"Why she didn't say a word to me at first—received me very kindly, and listened to all I'd got to tell; but as those speeches depended upon certain remarks which she never made, I couldn't use them; and as I went on, and found her listening, and never saying a word to help me, I got confused, and stammered and spluttered, and lost myself in a labyrinth of words, until I'm sure she couldn't understand me, for be hanged if I could myself! But she bore it very patiently until I made a dead stop, and as I found I could not extricate myself, I said plump at once, I love you with all my heart and soul, better than anything in the whole world beside, except my honour, and I love you quite as dearly as that. I'll do anything for you—I'll fight for you, die for you, and marry you, if you'll have me.'"

"And what said she?" asked Wat, on finding him pause.

"Why it took away her breath at first, as it did mine, for I was so afraid I should not get it all out that I said it in a breath; but when she had a little recovered, she said a great many kind things about thanking me for my good feeling towards her, but as she had fully made up her mind never to marry, she begged of me to forget her as soon as I possibly could, and said I should not find it difficult—but I know better than that, and I told her so. Well, then she said that if I really loved her—which I vowed I did, and I do, and I'll take any oath that I speak truth—that she regretted it very much, for she could never return it, and she could well appreciate what my feelings were by her own. Now that was a point I didn't exactly understand, but as I saw there were tears in her eyes, I could not ask for an explanation; I only said that I hoped with all my heart what I had said had not brought the glittering drops there; she said no, and then I asked if there was a chance of altering her determination. She replied, very decidedly, none whatever; that I was never, if I could help it (which I know I can't), to think of her again, even as if I had never seen her; and with very warm thanks for past kindness and for my present offer, she bade me farewell, at the same time telling me it was very unlikely that we should ever meet again—"

"Indeed;" exclaimed Wat, "what could have made her say that?"

"I don't know," replied John Chandos mournfully, shaking his head, "I hadn't the heart to ask her; she held out her small white hand to me, I kissed it, and would have said something, but I felt as if I should choke, and, I'm almost ashamed to say, hot tears forced their way into my eyes, and so to avoid shewing myself the fool I was, I departed as quick as I could,

and here I am with my heart I don't know how many pounds heavier than when I left you."

"Well, it is the fortune of war," exclaimed Wat, with a view to cheer him. "You are very young yet, and you may see another you could like as well, and who would gladly return your love."

"I shall not try," replied John Chandos. "It is my first and last essay in love. Perhaps it is better as it is, though I don't think so now; however, it can't be helped, and dull heartedness won't alter it. I shall therefore cast off all care, look to Bellona as my ladye love, and earn for myself the name of a preux chevalier; and when I die, if I don't have the myrtle, it shall go hard if I die without the laurel to wave over me."

"Whatever doubt there may be about the myrtle, there can be none about the laurel," exclaimed Wat. "You say well and wisely, and I would with all my heart, that instead of keeping us idly here, Edward would cross the seas, give us employment, and with it some chance of getting a laurel."

"He will, never fear! He is too fond of fighting to remain quiet long," said John Chandos. "As soon as he comes over he'll stir them all up; there will be plenty of work for all. Let but Sir Walter have the cutting of it out, and you'll find whole forests of laurels for those who are hardy enough to pluck them."

"They must be in dangerous places, indeed, to prevent my having a grasp at them," uttered Wat, enthusiastically; "for I have made up my mind to get them, or leave my body on the field where they grow and are to be gathered."

"Hey, for a desperate battle field!" exclaimed John Chandos, rising. "I could wish for nothing better at this moment than to have to vault into my saddle, and head a dashing charge against a whole host. By St. John! I am just in the mood, and if honour were now to be gained, now would be the time I could make my boldest essay for it. But the opportunity of signalising oneself comes not at a wish, and therefore 'tis of no use wasting words upon it. Good den, Wat, let us pray for a speedy arrival to our bold King Edward, and then let us see which will be the first to win his spurs, you or I."

"None will more gladly try for them than I," cried Wat, "and though I like you, John Chandos, honouring your prowess, your courage, and the nobility of your nature, yet will I do my best, that if but one pair are to be gained in the first field, they shall be mine, even though I have to gain them over thy head."

"By the mass! a rivalry I shall be proud of," ejaculated John Chandos; "it will be a sharp trial, for be they buckled on the heels of death I'll have at them."

"They are usually to be found there," replied Wat; "but though I am not given to boasting, were they buried in the centre of the grim king's heart, I'd cut my way to them. But this is mere talking; let us wait until the time arrives, and may he who best deserves them, win and wear them."

"Amen!" said John Chandos. "Now for a stoup of wine, and the Father of Mercies grant me a short memory! Farewell! until next we meet."

"Farewell!" replied Wat; and John Chandos, heaving a sigh he could not stifle, walked with a step slow enough to be deemed sad and thoughtful, out of the apartment, while Wat threw himself upon a chair, and was soon buried deeply in thought.

The winter passed slowly away, and they still remained inactively in Ghent. No tidings did he hear of Violet, not a word, not a token, and though he uttered no complaint or abated his alacrity and attention in the performance of his duties, yet in his heart he repined much at his situation; he was not, however, the only one who felt the idleness in which it seemed he was passing his most valuable time, for there was scarce a warrior in the service who did not complain of their inactivity. It, however, bid fair to have a change, for as soon as spring appeared Edward came over to Antwerp, attended by a large number of earls, barons and knights, men-at-arms, and archers, and he was hailed with great glee, for it was now fully believed that there would be plenty of active service. Sir Walter Manny, and the Earl of Derby, with all the troops, accompanied of course by Wat Tyler, Michael, Leowulf, &c., Jacob von Artaveld, and his troops, all quitted Ghent for Antwerp, and there paid their court to Edward, who lived in the most sumptuous style.

Edward was not of a nature to pass his time in pomp and pageantry only; he, therefore, as soon as he arrived, was anxious to know if the German, Flemish, and Norman nobles, who had promised him their support, were ready to give it. He summoned his cousin, the Duke of Brabant, the Duke of Gueldres, who was his brother-in-law, the Marquis of Juliers, the Lord John of Hainault, and all the nobles whose promises he had received. They all came in great haste and in great splendour to pay their homage to him, and he was not long in putting the question roundly to them, and was enraged to find they hesitated and tried to shuffle out of their promises, but he would not stand any evasion, and kept them to the point; and then they had a long consultation, which ended in their returning for answer, that they had visited Antwerp only for the pleasure of seeing him; that they were not in a position to return a decisive answer, but they would retire home, and return whenever he pleased, prepared to give such an answer that the prosecution of his purpose should not remain with them.

Away they went. Edward chafed furiously, but was obliged to swallow his rage as a matter of policy; and as they named that day three weeks for their reply—he would grant no longer time—he waited anxiously for the day to arrive. In the meantime, the Duke of Brabant sent messengers to the King of France, to assure him that he would not act against him, or contrary to his interests, but that Edward being his cousin, he could not prevent his passing through his country.

When the appointed time arrived for the answers, Edward was outrageous at receiving nothing but excuses, the sum of which was, that unless he made the Duke of Brabant act with them they could do nothing; he (the Duke) was very near to France, and seemed to be indifferent to the cause, but as soon as they were sure that he was prepared to side with them, they would to a man be ready, and be in the field as soon as him. He quickly summoned the Duke of Brabant to him, showed him the excuses, and ran him so hard that he could not evade it any way, but by saying he would summon his council.

Edward's patience was worn out by their long deliberations; he interfered, and then the Duke said he would be ready when the position of affairs required, but he must see all the lords before he was even prepared to give that as his answer. Edward could not help himself, so submitted with a very bad grace, and the middle of August was fixed upon for a conference at Halle; it took place, and after almost endless debates and discussions, they came to the conclusion that they had no cause to quarrel with the King of France, but their Emperor

had, because Philip of Valois held possession of the Castles of Crevecœur in Cambresis, of Arleux in Artois, and of the city of Cambray, and there was an old law which said no King of France should hold possession of anything belonging to the Empire; now, if he could persuade the Emperor, upon these grounds, to declare war with France, they would at once be ready with men and arms to support and assist him. Edward grew frantic with rage, he stormed, and raved, and swore that he would do without them—be trifled with no longer, but proceed at once to war, backed only by his own troops; but Sir Walter Manny, who had great influence over him, persuaded him to accede, and almost undertook to get the permission of the Emperor, and after some little trouble Edward gave way, and replied to the council that he very *cheerfully* complied with their advice.

Ambassadors were despatched to the Emperor, and Edward took up his abode in the Castle of Louvain, belonging to the Duke of Brabant; the mission to the Emperor, after much trouble, was successful, and Edward was made his vicar all over his Empire, and Edward was installed at Arques, in Leige, with great pomp. The whole of the winter was consumed in this, but immediately it had passed away, he sent over to England for all his armament and his stores; and when St. John's day was passed, they all arrived in Vilvorde, a town of Brabant, and then he every day expected the arrival of the lords whose aid he had been promised; but week after week passed away, and they came not. He stormed and raged like a wounded lion.

At length September arrived, and not one had made appearance. The Duke of Brabant held back, and until he took the field not one would stir. In a furious rage Edward sent "strong" messages—as old Froissart hath it—to each, and summoned them to Mechlin on St. Giles's day, to give reason for their delay. He had sixteen hundred men at arms, and ten thousand archers under the command of the most brilliant men of the period; and he swore if the lords tarried longer, he would forego his design upon France, and turn upon them, even if it cost him his whole army, to chastise them.

This threat brought them in quick time, and after many debates, on finding that Edward would put up with no excuse, or wait a day longer, they gave their consent to march in a fortnight; but, to give an appearance to their cause, they sent challenges to Philip of France. The Duke of Brabant was the only one who held back; and when Edward asked him his reason, in a tone and with an action that made him almost jump out of his skin, he replied, by saying he would do his part in proper time and place. Edward laughed him to scorn; but he would not suffer his luke-warmedness to affect any of the others. The challenges were sealed and given in charge to the Bishop of Lincoln, who, making the best of his way to Paris, delivered them.

They were no sooner despatched, than Sir Walter Manny, taking an opportunity to be alone with Wat, said to him,—

"Now, Wat, the time has arrived for me to put into practice my intention of making the first incursion into France. I have obtained Edward's permission, and on the first day of next week we will depart. You wished to have the commission of gathering the lances I shall take with me, so proceed at once, and I am sure thy judgment will pick me out a band who will defy and defeat thrice their number."

"Hurrah!" cried Wat; "how I have longed for *this moment to* arrive! How weary, how wretchedly tedious have been to me the months which have been frittered away in the vacillations of these German lords! I had almost lost the spirit of enterprise which first induced me to enlist under your banner, and, indeed, had grown so disheartened by remaining inactively here for twenty months, that had not Edward's perseverance and determination brought these long discussions to a close, I should have been induced to apply for my release, and turned my labours into another channel."

"What, and given up all chance of name and fame?" exclaimed Sir Walter. "By the Mass! I think I know you better; a little heaviness of spirit might have produced such a thought, but if you had been put to the test, you would have clung to the steel and the banner still."

"I hardly know. The absence of all intelligence from England; the sick longing to know what has occurred to Violet during this slow unemployed interval which has possessed me, would have made me forego everything, if I had remained inactive much longer, to be satisfied on that point."

"But you may be sure that she is safe and in good hands, while in the charge of her foster father and uncle," observed Sir Walter; "and the quiet firmness of her nature, her unchangeable disposition to all that is pure, and chaste, and high-minded, ought to make you rest contented, that though you have been so long apart, she is as free from evil or danger, and as unlikely to change in her affections, as though you were by her side."

"My trust in Violet is unbounded," cried Wat, fervently; "my faith in the Holy Virgin is not more perfect than my confidence in her; but my satisfaction is not so entire that she may be free from all evil, although under the care of those who can and have an earnest desire to protect her. I am led to think thus from the account I received when in England last, of the unpleasant adventure which befel her previous to my arrival there."

"But her uncle did rescue her," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny; "and those who wronged her have suffered death for their unmanly deeds."

"True, but it proves they were not so watchful as to have prevented its taking place in the first instance," persisted Wat; "I have every reliance on the care and courage which Ethelbert Evesham will exert for her, when occasion requires, but he looks not on her with a lover's eyes—"

"You would not have him, would you?" interrupted Sir Walter, with a laugh.

"I would," replied Wat, "provided he regarded her as an uncle too."

"Oh!" responded Sir Walter.

"What I mean is," continued Wat, "that not possessing the same love for her as I feel—the same nature of love—mine being adoration, and his being that which is inspired by a beloved child, he is, though ready and able to revenge, not keen-sighted enough to anticipate and prevent an evil before it is carried into execution; whereas I feel as though, were I by her side, my glance would be keener than an eagle's to detect the slightest appearance of any villanous plan against her happiness, and be ready with my good right hand to crush it ere she should be made aware of its existence."

"The egotism is pardonable for the spirit it conveys," said Sir Walter, smiling, "and is excusable because we all feel the same in similar situations. However, you must banish all thought of her meeting with mischances, because it is vain and weak to entertain them. You acknowledge, if an evil befals her, Ethelbert will rescue her from it, and I am quite

satisfied that were the worst to come to the worst, she would rather suffer death than dishonour; so, as you cannot be at hand to assist her in case of mischance, do not indulge in any idea that a danger is likely to occur to her; but with your armour put on your old spirit, your unflinching resolution, your bright aspirations for the green wreath, for the name that shall be traced in gold upon honour's white and spotless banner, and believe that every blow you strike brings you nearer to winning and wearing her. Look ye, Wat, the eyes of all engaged in this expedition against France, will be upon us in our essay next week, and those who do boldest and best will, in all human probability, enter the first field with his knight's spurs. So, my gallant friend, away with dull thoughts, and hurrah for the laurel!"

"My dull thoughts will not make me hang back, or do less than I have always cherished hopes of accomplishing," replied Wat; "but I can perceive, through your kind and friendly arguments, that it is but weakness to entertain them; and so, with every hope for the best, with a determination not to meet any evil half way, I will cast off the oppression which has lately enveloped me, and emulate the gayest as I will the most daring in your troop."

"It is well said, and I know will be well done," exclaimed Sir Walter. "Now away with you, and pick out forty fellows who will as soon think of turning their backs upon any danger, however great it may be, as they would of storming a castle with straws for weapons."

"You shall have no cause to complain of the hearts who will back your bold undertaking," replied Wat; "and whatever the feat, if it seem but in the power of twice the number of men to perform it, we will achieve it."

He then quitted Sir Walter's presence, and using considerable discretion and perception, chose only such men as he was satisfied by observation had not the slightest fear of anything sublunary. In his selection he was aided by Leowulf, and when the choice was completed, a more complete or more gallant band could not be met with anywhere. Sir Giles Manny (a brother of Sir Walter), Michael, and Mark Grayling were of the party chosen for this expedition; and in case occasion should require a division of their force, Sir Walter entrusted the command of ten men to Leowulf, and ten to John Chandos, who, as soon as he heard of the undertaking, would not be left out of it; he obtained permission of the Earl of Derby, whose squire he then was, and when he had received it he was delighted beyond measure that he should have something to do which would help him to drive away the dull thoughts which Rubacelle's refusal of his love had occasioned; the remaining twenty men Sir Walter Manny had under his own control, and Wat was, under all circumstances, to fight by his side.

Rubacelle, when the troops quitted Ghent for Antwerp, left the convent in which she had sojourned, and went there too, and when she learned the expedition on which Wat was bound, she resolved to accompany him in it; he remonstrated with her upon it, but she was not to be dissuaded; it was in vain he used every argument as strongly, but as kindly as he could; she would not be denied—she listened passively and silently to all he urged, but when he had concluded she declared herself unmoved in her resolution; she wept, and said it was the only satisfaction she had on earth to be near him, and that the perils of the enterprise had no terrors for her equal to the horrors of suspense she should endure during his absence. Overcome by her tears, and a keen sense of her forlorn and cheerless situation, he consented, provided Sir Walter Manny's assent could be obtained to suffer one more than the number agreed upon to join the party. In disguising herself she had stained her face, and had so well arranged her apparel, and her actions, incited by a powerful love—what is there that feeling will not make one accomplish?—that it would have been more than a common scrutiny which could have detected her in being other than a slight delicate boy; and when Wat saw her in her page's attire, and perceived the pains she had taken, and the success which attended them, he felt less hesitation in going to Sir Walter Manny and preferring the request. At first Sir Walter denied him; but when Wat urged it, and stated that it was for one who was without a friend but himself in Antwerp, or more correctly speaking, in the world, and who would consider being left behind as far worse than death, he assented. Wat hastened with an account of his success to Rubacelle, and in her joy she could have almost found it in her heart to love Sir Walter Manny for his kindness.

At the expiration of the week, everything being prepared, Sir Walter and his gallant troop, in the presence of King Edward, the Duke of Brabant, the Duke of Gueldres, all the German lords who had joined the King of England's standard, and the whole of the troops ready for the field, departed to put into execution his chivalrous project.

It should have been stated that, with the exception of Wat, Leowulf, and John Chandos, none of the troopers forming the expedition knew the purpose for which Sir Walter had assembled, and now led them. They had been given to understand that the gallant knight needed their services for a chivalrous and daring enterprise, but the real purport of the expedition had not transpired; even the lords who had witnessed their departure, save Edward, were not any wiser—nor was Sir Walter more explicit during their progress through Brabant; but when they had reached Hainault, and were passing through the wood of Blaton, and after having partaken of some refreshment with which they were provided, Sir Walter drew them up in a circle, and thus addressed them,—

"My gallant followers! I think it essential you should know the nature of the service upon which you are engaged, and as the time draws nigh for its accomplishment, I have taken this opportunity of acquainting you with it. Before you enlisted upon this enterprise, it was with the full understanding that it was fraught with extreme danger—danger, which nothing but a stout heart and a desperate sword could surmount—the most unflinching firmness and reckless daring would enable you to conquer, and realize the project I have in view: I believe you fully understood this, did you not?"

"We did!" replied the men with one voice.

"Aye," cried Leowulf; "there is not a man here who wasn't given to understand that death would be treading upon his heels every step he took; and I can answer that there is not one man here who cares one jot about it, but are prepared, whatever the peril, to carry out your designs."

"He speaks our thoughts," cried the men warmly.

"Ho! ho! you fighting dogs, I know I do!" exclaimed Leowulf, with a rich laugh.

"Well, my gallant fellows!" continued Sir Walter, "that point being settled to my satisfaction, I will proceed to the next, which I hope will meet with yours. You must know that I made a promise, no matter when—no matter where—no matter to whom. It may have been to nobles and ladies in England—it may have been to a single unescutcheoned friend in

Ghent, or in Antwerp, but that matters not. I have made the promise—that as soon as our noble and warlike master, King Edward, declared war with France, I would, with a chosen few, be the first to enter it, to take some castle or strong town, or, at least, to perform some deed of arms which might make the most gallant and noble men of this time, or in times to come, exclaim with the most fervent enthusiasm, 'Would that I had done it!' This have I resolved to do, and this is the expedition upon which I am leading you."

"Hurrah!" cried the men with one burst.

"Now, my noble hearts, I feel that response run like fire through my veins to my heart, making it glow with strong joy," exclaimed Sir Walter, the water glistening brightly in his eyes; "and I feel that whatever trust I may place in your support will not be leaning upon a broken reed. I design to push as far as Montaigne—which is the first town in the kingdom of France that we shall reach from here—surprise, and carry it; but, understand me, this is a simple expedition of chivalry, and therefore there must be no hand found pillaging, nor must one maiden be injured even by a word of insult; those who will, and wish to act with me heart and hand, will see this command enforced; and should I light on any one disobeying it, though he were my dearest friend on earth—my own brother even, I would hew him down as if he were my bitterest foe. Now you know my purpose; and if there is one man here who finds in a corner of his heart a reluctance to proceed—for I again assert the peril will be of no common nature, for the achievement is not—let him at once declare it, and return from whence he came, with the understanding that his courage will still remained unimpeached: I know many men whose courage I cannot question, but whose coolness, whose discretion would forbid them joining me in such a feat as this, where, though the glory be great, the hazard is so much greater as to render the acquirement of the glory a matter of doubt. Remember, I shall not think lightly of him who quits me, or be sorry to still look on his face as a member of my troop, but I must have no unwilling or reluctant followers now; those who come with me must join me heart and hand, follow my commands to the letter, whatever the difficulty be through which they may have to cut their way to perform it: therefore, he who has a second thought upon the matter speak at once, for after the present time it will be too late."

He paused a few moments, and not a voice replied. He smiled as he looked from face to face, with an expression that made their hearts leap in their bosoms, for they saw it was one of proud triumph at their unanimity, and when his glance had embraced them all, he said,—

"Then I am to understand, you one and all cheerfully follow me, natheless the danger?"

The spontaneous "hurrah!" which burst from the men as his voice ceased, was more than sufficient to assure him of their readiness to follow him anywhere, through any peril, and his bosom swelled proudly and gleefully as he thanked them, and gave the order to move forward.

As they proceeded on their journey, John Chandos, who had once or twice appeared very thoughtful, rode up to Wat, and said to him earnestly,—

"I've been puzzling my head until it aches, respecting the boy who accompanies you, and as I can't bear it any longer, I have come to ask a few questions of you concerning him—I know your good nature will pardon my rudeness; Who is he? I have never seen him before, but he is so wonderfully like Rubacelle in features that I cannot help looking
and the boy don't seem to like it. Have you o
the likeness?"

"Yes," replied Wat, rather embarrassed, "
a strong resemblance certainly."

"Well, I thought my eyes could not s
deceive me as to fancy a likeness when the
none," returned John Chandos; "Who is he
does he come from?"

"He is a relation of the maiden's," replied

"A relation!" iterated John Chandos; "
thought she had not one."

"Oh yes," replied Wat, with a face not v
like scarlet, "her mother, who was the daug
the old miser at Cadsant, married a poor you
he had relatives. The youth who is now with
related to Rubacelle's father." This, though
the truth, seemed to Wat to be so very like t
lie, that he could not look John Chandos in t
and felt as if he was guilty of some crime worth
greatest scorn. This story had been provided
questions might be asked. Wat had not suff
practised it to utter it without hesitation; be
felt it no joke to repeat it to one, who, lookin
her with the searching glance of a lover, w
likely to detect the truth, and place him in a
awkward predicament; however, John Chand
accustomed to anything like artifice, never
moment doubted Wat's word, but listened
explanation with interest, and when Wat cea
said—

"Well, I don't now so much wonder
semblance, but it did strike me as extraordi
first. I say, Wat, would you mind parting wi
to me?"

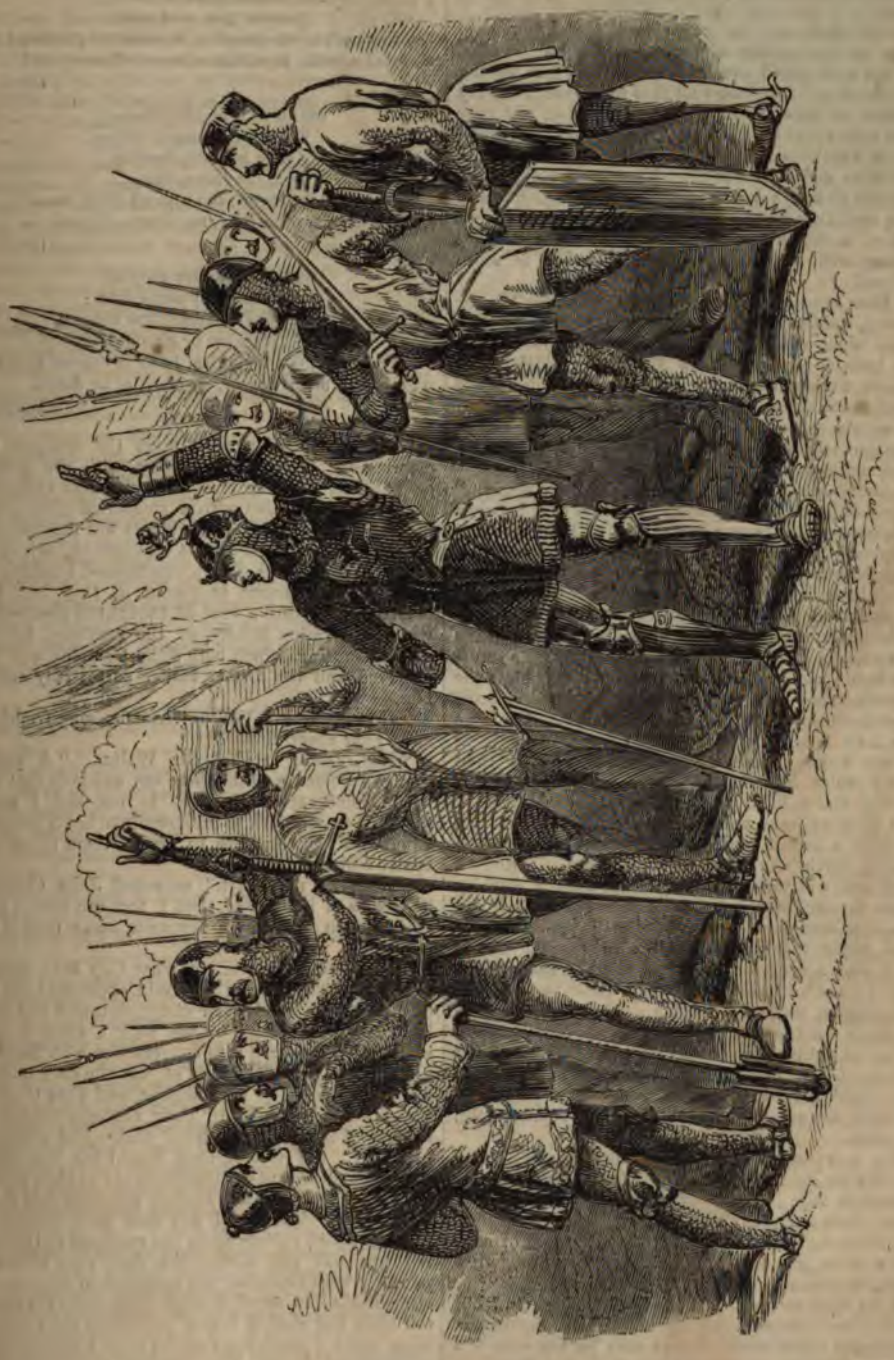
"Parting with him?" echoed Wat, with s
almost thrown off his guard by the unex
request.

"Yes," answered John Chandos, "you m
sure that with me he will meet with every con
tion for his comfort and happiness; the truth
looks so exactly like Rubacelle, only much br
in the skin—for her's was as white as snow,
should like very much to have him, in order, W
I can't have the maiden, I may have one near m
resembles her so very much in face, in manner
in voice. Now I know that it is rather an exor
request, but it struck me that under the c
stances, you would, perhaps, grant it; and be s
that, if there is any way in which I can repa
you have only to name it to find it done."

"There are few men on earth I would so wi
oblige as yourself, John Chandos," exclaimed
somewhat perplexed by his position; "and if I
consistently, I would in this matter; but my h
is pledged to protect him, to cherish and guar
and therefore I should be breaking my word t
with him, and you would not wish that, I know
independent of that consideration, the matte
not exactly rest with me; I much question, tha
I to consent, and you were to tell the boy so, w
he would quit me to follow you, although you
him by every inducement and persuasion you
imagine."

"Will you give me leave to try?" asked
Chandos, eagerly.

"With the understanding that the reques
ginates and rests solely with yourself," replied
"I would not have the gentle boy for one m
believe that I had the slightest thought of p
with him, the most remote desire that he s
leave me; and in making your proposition to
let him perfectly understand that I have n



whatever to do with the request. I have reason to believe he is attached to me, and he imagines to a certain extent it is returned; I would not, therefore, have his spirit wounded by supposing that I even tacitly consented to your putting the question to him."

"He shall not be aware that you know anything of the matter whatever," said John Chandos. "I can understand your feeling well, and it is worthy of you; I will take care that it is not invaded by my conduct in this affair. I confess to being not over expert in these little delicate proceedings, but when I have another's honour in my keeping, I can be as dexterous and skilful as the best. I will not put the question to him yet, but wait until this expedition is over, and then he will have a chance of seeing what sort of a fellow I am, and whether he will mind sharing with me the favours fortune has in store for me."

"How now, my gallant squires!" cried Sir Walter Manny, suddenly riding up to them, "Are ye settling which shall win the spurs, and be the first to bear the banner his ladye love shall with skilful and delicate fingers weave for him in chaste design of fanciful and exquisite broidery? By my halidame! the serious aspect of your countenances, as each of ye questions and replies, could be wrought by matter no less important."

"Our conference was not on so stirring a subject," replied John Chandos, quickly, "but on one, between ourselves, which was private, but of little less importance. At what time do you suppose we shall reach Montaigne?" he inquired, changing the subject.

"A little before sunrise," replied Sir Walter, with a smile, making a shrewd guess that the fair damsel of the miser of Cadsant had some large share in the conversation he had interrupted, "and ere the sun is two hours old we must be masters of it, unless the preponderance of numbers against us renders such a resolve impossible of accomplishment. Look ye now how bonnily the moon is rising up to light us on our way? Come, John Chandos, I know thou hast a voice right musical, and doth know verses stirring, and such as make's a bold man's heart grow glad when he hears them; thou'rt never backward in granting a favour where thou can'st, or bashful in sending forth thy voice amid the roar of strife. I know you will not now hang back, though nothing meets our ear but the tramp of our steeds' feet, and the occasional rustle of the green leaves above our head, as the soft wind sighs through them. Come, thou hast a song for the battle field, I know—let us hear it; the men have been silent these two or three hours agone, and a few stirring words will make them buckle on their resolution afresh. Now, John Chandos, thou wilt not give me cause to ask this of thee twice?"

"Not I—an' I am rough, I am ready!" as saith our friend the smith; an' if you bid me sing, why I'll e'en do my best i' that fashion," replied John Chandos.

"A courteous answer. Ho! there, hearts!" cried Sir Walter to the men who were proceeding in straggling file; "bend your ears to a right bold ballad from our preux squire, John Chandos."

"Hurrah!" cried the men, who were glad of anything to enliven the gloom of the deep wood they were traversing.

"By Mars and Apollo!" cried John Chandos, "but their cheer reminds me of one which my cousin Alaric put together and taught me; 'tis the song of a knight about to enter the battle-field, and thus doth it run,"—and so saying, he commenced, in a clear manly rich voice, the following .

Song of the Knight.

My standard's proudly waving,
The foe are on the plain;
My burning heart is craving
To meet them once again.
The trumpet's loudly sounding, my sword is glancing high—
My steed is wildly bounding, in beams of sunny sky!
Hurrah!

My shield is brightly flashing,
Reflecting gleams of light—
My steed is swiftly dashing
On to the distant fight.
My soul is in the action; and with my latest breath
I'll shout a cheer for glory, for victory, or death!
Hurrah!

I've left no fair one weeping,
My sword's my bonny bride;
And when with death I'm sleeping,
Oh, place her by my side!
Hurrah! my heart is glowing, I fear no cypress wreath;
I battle for bright honour, for glory, or for death!
Hurrah!

The effect of this song upon the troopers was marvellous. They listened to it with the greatest delight, and when he concluded the first verse, they seconded the burden with a stentorian cheer; they did the same to each, and when it was finished gave three cheers with the utmost strength of their lungs, and from a previous silence, commenced laughing and chatting, and became as gleeful as they had been before sinking into a kind of thoughtful abstraction; while Sir Walter Manny, on the contrary, fell into a fit of musing, which both John Chandos and Wat observed, and the former rather surprisedly said to him,—

"How now, Sir Walter! has my song frightened away your cheerfulness?"

"Nay, John," replied Sir Walter. "A passing thought crossed me that there are words in that song which come somewhat home to me, and I feel as though I would wish to preserve them in my memory; I must get you therefore to repeat them to me until I have acquired them."

"With all my heart," answered John Chandos; "there is a line or so that I too can apply, and I shall cherish it now as a favourite more than I ever did."

Wat Tyler knew well to what they both alluded; a sigh escaped him, for he could appreciate the void in their hearts which their disappointment had made, but he said nothing—he fell back a little from his position, and entered into conversation with Rubacelle and Michael, who, beside Wat, was the only one who knew the secret of her disguise, and thus they continued on their way until their near approach to the borders of the wood rendered silence and precaution necessary. Sir Walter then issued his last orders, and made all the men dismount—see to their armour, tighten it, regirth their horses, remount and ride in close order. The wood was now soon cleared, and they advanced rapidly upon the entrance to the town. All was still and silent--the first grey streaks of morning were preluding the approach of the sun—the clear bright dew stood in large drops upon the grass—the birds had already begun to warble their morning song, but the inhabitants of the town were still buried in profound repose; they reached the wicket of the town, and found it open. Sir Walter halted here and alighted, ordering most of the men to do the same;

and stationing a few as a guard to prevent being surprised from that quarter, he entered the town, followed by all those he caused to dismount. They proceeded up the street, unopposed and unseen, until they arrived at the Castle keep, under the archway of which they passed, but found a large wicket, and the gate which formed the entrance to the castle, close shut, and as they were searching for some vulnerable part to effect an entrance, they were discovered by the warder, who suddenly shouted out at the top of his voice,—

"Treason! treason! treason!"

"Grayling," cried Sir Walter, hastily, "you carry a cross-bow—bring down yon yelping hound."

Mark in an instant had his bow to his shoulder, his aim taken, and the whistling bolt was discharged, but as the warder had overheard the command, he took good care to duck down behind the rampart, but only just in time to save himself, for the bolt shaved the top of his head, tearing away a part of his capuchon, and by its mere force flinging him with violence backwards. His first impression was that he was winging his way to the other world as fast as he could fly; another moment showed him that he was mistaken, and taking a peep through the embrasure, he perceived Mark Grayling waiting to take another shot at him, but as that was a favour he was anxious to dispense with, he kept himself seated, and blowing his horn with all his might, continued every now and then at intervals to shout, "Treason! treason!" He was soon joined by the soldiers of the castle, who came pouring on to the walls in such numbers as to convince Sir Walter and those with him, at a glance, that to attempt to carry the castle by storm, opposed to such odds, would be mere madness, and must end in a signal defeat; yet it is but justice to them to say, that had Sir Walter commanded the attack to be made, they would have obeyed him, and never given back until they had conquered or perished to a man; but our gallant knight hoped that when the soldiery perceived their superiority of numbers they would immediately sally forth, and thus give them a chance of doing something towards obtaining possession; but it seemed that the soldiers, or their leaders, were moved by strong considerations of personal safety, and concluding that it would be the wiser, no less than the safer plan, to remain where they were, would not come out.

Sir Walter Manny waited with patience for some little time, but saw no indication of any intention to oblige him by making their appearance without the castle; he, therefore, through the medium of a strong-lunged follower, challenged them, but they stared very hard at him, and did not comply with his request. He grew impatient, and his next message was loaded with scoffs and taunts, with jeers and contemptuous ridicule, but was as unsuccessful as the one preceding. Mark Grayling then discharged a few bolts, which had the effect of making many of them scatter about in confusion, but shew no desire whatever to come forth. They fired a few bolts in retaliation, but they were so badly directed, and so unskilfully discharged, that they only drew shouts of derisive laughter from the gallant little band who were drawn up there defying them to combat, though they were gathered upon the walls in the ratio of four to one. The time was fast waning, and the soldiers would not stir, so Sir Walter Manny exclaimed—

"The cowardly rouges will not come out, we must therefore try if we cannot draw them out by stratagem; the burning of a few houses under their noses may have some effect—let us try it."

Obedient to his commands his band followed him, but not until they had heaped reproach and insult upon the soldiery, who so far from appearing enraged at what they heard, took their scoffs very patiently, and viewed their departure with the most undisguised satisfaction. Sir Walter and his men sallied into the street again, and picking out several houses, they aroused the inhabitants, made them turn out, and gave them time only to save whatever was most valuable, and then set fire to the houses, which being all of dry wood, burned furiously, and were speedily consumed; they soon communicated to others, and the flames spread rapidly, running up to a tremendous height; but it had not the effect of drawing out one of the garrison. The inhabitants were dreadfully frightened—they expected to be slaughtered and made prisoners, and several made attempts to fly through the wicket by which Sir Walter had entered, but the guard stationed there turned them back, and they returned to communicate to the alarmed townspeople that there was a band without the town no less numerous, and full as fierce as those within. This news added to the consternation they were already in, and they ran about the place shrieking for help and mercy. Several of them were seized by the order of Sir Walter Manny, and despatched to the castle to beg of them to come forth and save them, which errand they performed right gladly, but without succeeding in drawing forth one of the cowardly rascals; and when Sir Walter found that there was nothing to be gained but the unopposed destruction of the town, and thereby the ruin of the unfortunate inhabitants, he determined to quit the town and pursue the road to Valenciennes, and see what success he could get there; he therefore called his men together, and leading them once more to the castle, essayed to draw its inmates forth as vainly as before, and then, tired with his futile attempts, he reappeared in the streets, and marched down to the wicket where the guard was placed with the horses, the inhabitants viewing his actions with the greatest fear and mistrust, although his men had rigidly adhered to his commands, and had abstracted nothing, or laid a rude hand upon woman or child.

When they reached their horses, they mounted and quitted the town, rather disappointed in not meeting with any adventure which could call into play their chivalrous daring: they made straight for Condé, which they soon reached, and passing by the river Haynes, took the road to Valenciennes, which they pursued for some distance, and then diverged from it, leaving it until they reached Avesnes, where stood a large abbey, which they entered, and being too powerful to be refused, were well provisioned and provided with couches for the night. The next morning they departed early, and pushed forward for a place called Bouchain, which boasted a strong castle, and as they gazed from a distance upon its high and frowning walls, their hearts beat high with hope that here at least they should have some chance of performing some worthy deeds of arms, and they spurred their horses forward, animated by their anticipations, until they were within bow-shot of the castle, and then they heard the horn of the warder sounding a challenge to them, which they answered not until they got beneath the walls, which they found studded with men, and then, in the name of Edward, King of England and Vicar of Germany, they demanded the surrender of the castle unconditionally; this was, however, as instantaneously refused, and presently the Governor appeared upon the walls, and Sir Walter addressed him in the same terms.

"Surrender," he cried "without delay, and trust

to our clemency; if you hesitate, and in the event of an attack upon you, you are defeated, I will not answer for your fate."

"I will gladly run all hazard," replied the Governor; "my numbers more than treble thine, and if you venture a battle you must assuredly be defeated; I would therefore advise thee to retire, or thou wilt run great risk of incurring the fate with which you threaten me."

"Thour't a gallant and well-spoken knight!" exclaimed Sir Walter Manny, "and I can perceive hast nought pertaining to thee akin to dastard fear; thou wilt not, if thou art determined not to surrender, hesitate to give battle at once to forty gallant hearts who defy thee and all thy host, and who, if thou dost refuse to come forth, will hold thee and thy people up to all men's scorn for all time to come."

"I would not shed blood unnecessarily," exclaimed the Governor; "and if I were to accept your challenge, you would all be cut to pieces without exception."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Leowulf; "it strikes me that cutting forty such stout villains as us to pieces is no light job, and though you treble our number, it would take more than thrice your number to do it. Ho! ho! what say ye, hearts?"

The men answered him by a loud cheer.

"You hear that cheer?" cried Sir Walter Manny, while the echo of it was still ringing in their ears; "such is my answer, and if thou and thy men lack not both spirit and courage, you will not hesitate to lead them forth at once."

"Thy blood be on thine own head!" cried the Governor, leaving the walls.

"Amen!" cried John Chandos. "Now, Wat, hurrah for the spurs!"

"Aye," cried Wat, "thine or mine; you must do your best, for I shall make a bold venture for them."

The sound now arose on their ears of the trumpet gathering the soldiery within the castle ready for a sally. Sir Walter ordered his men to dismount, and had the horses conveyed to a clump of trees a short distance from the spot, and then drew up his men in the best order possible to receive them. Wat had some difficulty in persuading Rubacelle to retire to the clump of trees until the fight had ended, and it was not until Michael, almost by force, led her away, vowing and protesting she must be mad to think of remaining in such danger, hazarding her own life, and damping all Wat's exertions by the fears he would naturally entertain for her. The last remark decided her, and she suffered Michael to bear her to the covert, promising him that she would remain quietly there until he or Wat came to fetch her thence.

As the sound of clanking chains and tramping feet told that the foe drew nigh, Leowulf exclaimed, in great glee,—

"Now come forth, my bonny five-foot of true steel—thou bright blade without flaw or speck—thou, who wert never wielded but on the side of right, and I trow with honour!—Ho! ho! my heart dances, and my blood runs up and down madly, and there's a throb in thy hilt, thou bold and tried friend, which tells me thour't no longer to lie idly in thy sheath! Ho! ho! cut us to pieces! will they, think'st thou, thou true blade? Ho! ho! let them try it! Let them try thee, thou honour's baton! Let them give me room for a fair swing of my arm with thee, thou beloved of my soul, in my hands, and then thou wilt right bonnily make them change their note about cutting to pieces."

"When thou hast finished addressing thy trusty weapon," exclaimed Sir Walter Manny, with a smile, "which, by the Mass, one would imagine was thy patron saint—see thour't prepared to catch the first comers who sally from the castle gates, and keep them well employed, so that those who come after may fall in confusion as they pour out, and then I expect they will find their numbers an incumbrance instead of an assistance."

He had not time to say more, when the gates flew open, and with a loud shout the soldiers belonging to the castle poured forth. They were met by Leowulf, Mark Grayling, and nine others, who commenced a desperate assault upon them as they appeared. John Chandos, aided by Sir Giles Manny and nine followers, wheeled rapidly to the other side of the gates, and commenced a furious attack also upon the foe as they came rushing out; while Sir Walter Manny, with Wat Tyler, Michael, and the remainder of the men, stood drawn up in front to prevent their advancing sufficiently from the castle so as to make their numbers available. The conflict, as man after man engaged, grew hot and fierce; but the Frenchmen being huddled together, unable to advance, pressed and pushed by those who kept arriving to their assistance, were unable to oppose the steady, determined little band with the same firmness and vigour which they displayed; and daunted by the cool determination and the terrible skill which every member of Sir Walter's band exhibited, they would fain have retired, but they were prevented by the mob behind them, who could not get into action themselves, and would not let others come out of it. Swords and battle-axes flashed in the air; the shouts of the combatants were mingled with the shrieks and groans of those who had been cut down; the French were unable to advance a step, and the English were similarly situated; as yet the latter had not lost a man, and the enemy had many, and, what was worse, were losing confidence fast, which Sir Walter was not slow to perceive, and his well-known shout and gallant actions animated his men to deeds almost incredible.

The fight was, however, not destined to continue long. In the heat of the *melée* Wat had got separated from Sir Walter Manny, and with the hope of doing feats of daring, which John Chandos, try as he might, could not surpass, he had used his weapon with his best skill and most untiring perseverance. He succeeded, too, in forcing his way among the Frenchmen, and closely followed by Michael, whose sword flashed here and there with little less vigour than his own, and whose actions were marked by the same reckless daring, with the exception only that Wat cut out the path and he followed it; and thus in the excitement and resistless energy with which they fought, they had cut a way for themselves, and got hemmed in, but still fought as though the odds were on their side.

Ultimately they got opposed to the Governor; but as he was attended by the flower of his men, and was himself a stalwart knight, they found that hot as the work had been which they had performed, they had now still hotter to do to keep their ground, and prevent themselves being cut down or taken prisoners; fortunately for them, Leowulf had caught a glimpse of a tall plume which the Governor wore, saw it dancing about, and as he knew he was the man who had talked so coolly about cutting the troops to pieces, he vowed he would make a strong attempt to capture him, if it was only to show him the fallacy of prophesying impossibilities; and chaunting a Saxon song, and swinging his tremendous sword about his head, he cut his way to his expected prisoner; the havoc he committed was immense, and though blows rained upon him from all sides, his suit of mail, every

ring of which he had proved was so true, that they fell upon him comparatively harmless, while his own blows, delivered with enormous force, and with a blade whose metal was so superbly tempered it seemed nothing could withstand it, carried death with them wherever they alighted.

His success was so unequivocal, and the effect of swords upon him so powerless, added to his extraordinary bearing, that those opposed to him began to imagine he bore a charmed life, and were glad to quit him for other foes less fierce and fearless, and thus he found it comparatively easy work to get closer and closer to that dancing plume, which proud as it looked waving here and there, he resolved should soon be humbled.

The lane which he made as he went on was filled up by Mark Grayling and the rest of those under his command, and as John Chandos at the other side was doing desperately, trying hard too to make a lane by which he could gain entrance to the castle, they bid fair to form a junction, and shut out a portion of the Frenchmen, whom Sir Walter Manny would either make prisoners or cut to pieces. Leowulf, as he drew nearer and nearer to the plume, chuckled, and laughed, and chaunted his song louder than ever, until at length he had worked himself almost face to face with its wearer, and then he discovered Wat and Michael. He was surprised for a moment, but on perceiving their position was a critical one—that, opposed to half-a-dozen powerful men, they were almost exhausted with their exertions—they were scarlet with heat, while the perspiration run down in large drops,

"Ho! ho!" he cried lustily, swinging his tremendous weapon round his head with a rapid whirl, "Brenchley for ever! The little village against the large towns—hurrah, my bonny lads! Down, you dogs!—cry quarter, you knaves! Ho! ho! for the bonny blade that never was buckled on a vanquished man, or ever waved in behalf of the defeated. Ho! ho! well done, my gallant Wat Tyler! Aha! that's right—Kentish play. Hurrah for Kent! the sweetest county in England's broad land, though my ancestors did dwell in the glades of merry Shirewood. Ho! ho! my bold Governor with the nodding plume, who hast only to open thy mouth to swallow us up, or to lift up thy finger to slit us to shreds—come hither, and front a man who will suffer thee to cut him in pieces if thou canst, or else will tumble thy proud plume to the dust. Ho! ho!"

Thus he continued shouting and delivering his blows with a resistless energy, and swept down all before him. The Frenchmen were dismayed at him, as well as at the determined manner with which they were combated by the whole of the troop. And at length, the Governor, hearing Sir Walter Manny's name frequently repeated as a war-cry, and knowing it was one to be dreaded by those opposed to it, ordered his trumpeter to sound a parley. It was some little time before it could be obeyed; for the hot blood of the combatants being roused, they were not able at a moment's notice to pause and listen quietly to whatever the Governor might have to say. However, by the exertions made on both sides, peace was in some degree restored, though no one of Sir Walter's people gave an inch of ground while the parley was taking place. Silence being obtained, the Governor exclaimed in a loud voice—

"I have heard the name of Sir Walter Manny repeated from mouth to mouth. Am I to understand that it is beneath his pennon you're fighting?"

"It is beneath his pennon that these gallant hearts have done so nobly," replied Sir Walter.

"Is Sir Walter here in person?" he inquired.

"I am Sir Walter Manny, for want of a better title," replied the knight.

"You could not bear a more gallant or honourable one," replied the Governor, with much condescension, at the same time advancing to where Sir Walter stood, and then continued—"I am aware that your King Edward has declared war against my Sovereign, and as I am also conscious of the rank which Sir Walter Manny holds in the English army, I am convinced that the little troop you have brought with you is but the forerunner of the army, and that it would be a piece of madness to hold out against you, when I am satisfied you will speedily have thousands at your back to second your efforts. I therefore resign my sword and this castle to you; and though I might wish a better fate, I know of no knight to whom I would so gladly resign it as yourself."

Sir Walter's troop gave a loud cheer, and the Frenchmen threw down their arms. Sir Walter and his party then marched into the castle, and took possession of it in King Edward's name. The flag of France, which had waved proudly from its walls, was taken down, and the arms of England were displayed in its place. Sir Walter smiled to himself at the conceit which the Governor of Bouchain had taken—that he but heralded the way for Edward's army; but it was not for him to show him the error under which he was labouring, and, therefore, he said nothing in contradiction, although he did not assent to its truth. It would not have mattered much any way, for the Governor had grown sick of the contest, and was glad to give it up. When he saw Leowulf stalking up to Wat's assistance, he was already cowed by the fierce attack, and the proximity which our hero and Michael had gained; and as they would not be cut down or give ground, he thought he must, and at that moment Leowulf whirling his gigantic sword, appeared, and he thought it then high time to look out for Sir Walter Manny, and make some excuse for surrendering, which should make the act appear less culpable than it really was. But he misled himself in indulging in such a hope, for when Sir Walter entered the castle, and found that there were one hundred and twenty men at arms, and eighty archers, he had not two opinions as to the courage of the Governor of Bouchain; and when, after they had gained possession, and the flag of England was flying over their heads, and they had been furnished with refreshments, he drew up his men to thank them for their gallantry, he enumerated the number they had defeated, and the strength of the place they had conquered—a feat which, he said, if he met with no other adventure before he rejoined Edward at Mechlin, he estimated as sufficient to crown their expedition with honour and praiseful remembrance—a feat which more than amply repaid them for the disappointment they had met with at Montaigne.

"And yet," said Leowulf with a laugh, "the Governor talked about cutting us to pieces!"

Immediately the fight had terminated successfully for the gallant little band, Wat made for the little clump of trees beneath which Rubacelle was passing the time in a state of agonised excitement, and when he approached, and she saw, that though flushed with his exertions, he was unhurt, she rushed into his arms and burst into tears of joy. He pressed her to his bosom, affected by this display of her affection for him, and led her from the spot to the Castle, with the thought of her upon him who was never out of his memory, but from whom hundreds of miles separated him—of whose fate and position he was profoundly ignorant, and of whom every little act of

kindness on the part of Rubacelle reminded him: though, to say truth, he required little reminding of one whose image was scarce ever absent from his mind. He gave a sigh to think of their long separation, and the thought was not brightened by his speculation of what time might elapse ere he could meet her. But then came the proud hope, the sanguine anticipation, that when he did, it would be to lay at her feet laurels which, though hardly, had been nobly earned; and with that reflection he shook off any feeling of sadness that had attempted to creep over him. He was warmly praised for his deeds that day by Sir Walter, who suffered no man to pass without his share of acknowledgment; and John Chandos was not slow to do him the justice he deserved, in acknowledging that he was second to none in what he had achieved.

It was not Sir Walter Manny's purpose to remain in Bouchain Castle more than one night, but he wished to retain it for Edward; yet, as he had not a man to spare, he resolved to accomplish it by a little stratagem; he therefore summoned the Governor to his presence, and said—

"In surrendering this castle to me you acted wisely, after having done your best to retain it for your master; but as you prudently foresaw it would be madness to maintain it against the power of King Edward, you did, not being able to do otherwise, what was best for you to do, yield it up to me. I have a very strong opinion respecting your honour and bravery, and as I know how a brave man would feel to be prisoner in a castle of which he has recently been possessor, I can guess what you must suffer at being nothing where you were lord over all. To spare you, therefore, the pain of such a feeling, I have adopted a certain resolution, which it depends upon you to carry out; and as it is a matter which rests solely upon your honour, I have no doubt of arranging it to your and my entire satisfaction."

"Whatever your dependence, Sir Walter Manny," replied the Governor, bowing, "it will not be placed upon a reed. I flatter myself my honour is unimpeachable."

Sir Walter bowed in his turn; but whether he thought so too was not exactly apparent. He, however, continued—

"My intention is this, if you will pledge me your honour, as a true and honourable knight, and will oath thy name to be held up to the scorn and disgust of all good men and true, if thou dost break thy pledge, to keep this castle, and all it contains, until claimed from thee by, or on behalf of, King Edward of England, I will remove every man belonging to me from it at once, leaving you Governor as before; only that you hold it for Edward 'stead of Philip of France, and I will not say thou shalt not remain Governor, an' thou keep'st thy faith truly, when Edward himself comes to claim it."

"I esteem thy offer a noble one," replied the Governor, eagerly; "one which none but the high and chivalric mind of the renowned Sir Walter Manny could have conceived. I gladly close with thine offer, and will hold the castle and domains of Bouchain of Edward King of England as faithfully as I did for Philip of France—so prosper my name, my honour, or whatever is most dear to me!"

"It is enough," cried Sir Walter Manny. "Then at sunrise myself and followers will depart, and leave thee as much possessor as when we found thee, only under another flag and master, but one whom you will find more generous, more noble, and kingly in all his attributes than, him whose service thou hast now renounced."

The Governor, too glad to be reinstated, responded warmly to Sir Walter's praise of Edward, and right joyously busied himself in seeing that everything which could recruit both man and steed was furnished to his late foes; and when the morning's dawn appeared, he had risen from his couch to get whatever was necessary to facilitate their departure, ready. When every man was mounted, and without the castle gates, their bright casques and shields, their weapons and armour, were glittering in the sunshine, and the horses neighing, prancing, and pawing the ground, impatient to be away, Sir Walter came to the gate, attended by the Governor.

"Adieu, my Lord Governor of Bouchain," he cried. "I have put trust in thee; if thou dost act treacherously thou wilt suffer bitterly, independent of tarnished honour, which, to a noble mind, is a stain and a punishment to which no torture of the body is equal—therefore beware what thou dost. The lion of England now floats from the ramparts; if it is replaced by the lilies of France when I have left, thou wilt enjoy no second clemency, nor will there be one stone left upon another to show where this castle stood."

"If I play recreant, may I be whipped through the world by cowards and knaves—the scorn of the highest, the scoff of the meanest," exclaimed the Governor. "I have pledged my honour to thee, Sir Walter, and as the word of honour of a true knight should be kept, so will I preserve mine."

"It is well," replied Sir Walter; "a fair good day to thee."

The Governor responded the adieu—the men gave a parting cheer, and at the word of the gallant knight, moved forward at full trot.

During a conversation which Sir Walter Manny had with the Governor of Bouchain, it transpired that the nearest castle to the spot was one which belonged to the Bishop of Cambray, by name Thin-l'Evêque. It was also one which was very strong, and being within a league of Cambray, was well garrisoned, and, in truth, bore such a good character for ability to withstand any attempts to conquer it, that Sir Walter, as soon as he heard its description, burned to attempt its capture, and indeed it was his principal motive for haste in quitting the castle he had conquered. When he and his brave followers had left Bouchain some distance, had crossed a river which rises in Arleux, and empties itself into the Scheld, and were speculating upon what Sir Walter purposed next attempting, he related what he had heard respecting Thin-l'Evêque, and of his resolve to try and carry it by assault. He was answered by loud acclamations, such cheers as convinced him there was not one utterer there who was insincere in giving breath to them, and they pushed forward merrily, as though they were bound for some bright festival, instead of deeds of blood and prowess, against odds sufficient to daunt the heart of many a man, who lacked neither spirit or courage. But such was the frame of mind of every man who formed that band, that had they been desired to attempt a deed in which certain destruction was inevitable, they would have gone coolly at it, and sold their lives as dearly as they could, but never for one moment entertained one thought of retreat, or of surrender.

The day was a beautiful one on which they were pursuing their way to Thin-l'Evêque, and they stopped early by the banks of a small stream to refresh themselves with provisions which they had brought from Bouchain, and when they had satisfied themselves; and were rested, and were again upon their journey, they perceived a cavalcade some dis-

tance before them, pursuing the same direction as themselves. As it appeared to be composed of about twenty horsemen, Sir Walter thought it necessary to halt and send some one forward to reconnoitre in case they should interfere with his designs on Thin-l'Evêque, and upon Wat was devolved the task. He galloped forward, and after a short absence returned, bringing intelligence that the party consisted of a number of armed retainers who were attending a young lady and a slim youth.

"In all probability," exclaimed Sir Walter, "the daughter and son of the worthy bishop, who are making the best of their way to the castle; let us follow them up closely, the gates that open wide to admit them will admit us also; look to your weapons, my bold hearts, and forward!"

The command was obeyed with alacrity, the horses were pricked to a gallop, and every man looked to his weapons and his armour, that at the hour of need they might not fail him. They soon were upon the heels of the little cavalcade preceding them, but, keeping at a certain distance, excited no apprehension in those they were following, who, albeit they saw them, mistook them for a band of lancers in the pay of some French noble, making their way to Cambray, which it was expected was about to be attacked by the King of England, aided by the German lords, and they were therefore under no alarm or surprise, when, as they were approaching the castle, they found the band drawing close upon them. As Sir Walter suspected, they summoned the warder of the castle, the drawbridge was lowered, and they passed over it, followed by Sir Walter, who, brandishing his weapon, was the first to gallop among the retainers, crying at the top of his voice,—

"On! on! A Manny! a Manny! St. George for England! On, my bold hearts!"

Wat was the next to dash after him; and John Chandos, Michael, and Leowulf, each making a struggle to be third, dashed over together, followed by the remainder of the troopers, all eager not to be last in the fray. As they rushed into the court-yard, some were in an instant engaged with the retainers, who were escorting the maiden and youth, while Leowulf, perceiving that one of the wings of the keep contained a number of lounging soldiery—a sort of guard-house—galloped up to it, flung himself from his horse, and found that the door opened outwardly. At the moment he arrived it was being thrown wide by one of the men, who saw the sudden appearance of an enemy, and was about to join his comrades to support them, at the same time calling to those within the keep to follow him. Leowulf knocked him down like a shot, by a tremendous blow in the face, closed the door like lightning, turned a massive key which was in the lock, and shot the bolt. There was also a huge chain, which he drew across and fastened to a hook which was placed there for the purpose of receiving it—twisted one of the links with immense strength, so that it would take much trouble to undo, and thus made prisoners of at least one-half of the strength of the garrison. When he had done it, he exclaimed, as he mounted his horse and galloped back to Sir Walter, whom he saw with the rest of the troop fighting desperately with more than their number, while others kept arriving from the walls, aroused by the shrill clangour of a trumpet, which told the presence of a foe,

"Ho! ho!—I trow that will keep a round number of the rogues quiet for a little while, and hinder them spoiling sport until we are ready to meet them. Ho! ho!—you may poke your heads at the loop-hole, and lift up your voices, but its all in vain. Ho! ho!—the thinnest knave among you cannot squeeze through there; ho! ho!—come forth my bonny blade. Ho, there—a Manny!—a Manny!" So shouting, he galloped into the thickest of the fray, and laid about him at a fearful rate. The soldiers and retainers belonging to the castle, taken thus by surprise—unable in their confusion to estimate the odds against which they were fighting—ridden down and trampled over, many cut down, and unaccustomed to oppose men who were half so daring or so used to warfare as those who had thus unexpectedly and fiercely surprised them, gave ground rapidly, and retreated towards the chief entrance to the castle, bravely contesting every step; but they were unable to resist the impetuosity with which they were assaulted, and their retreat speedily assumed the form of open flight.

They were pursued to the very steps, and Sir Walter gave the word to dismount and follow them. The words had scarcely left his lips ere every man threw himself from his horse and dashed after the fugitives. The fight now became frightful—they contested step for step up a long flight of stairs, continually having their force augmented by arrivals from various parts of the castle, through which the news of an attack from the English troops spread with the greatest rapidity; but natheless the Frenchmen numbered a hundred and more where the English counted but forty, they were beaten step by step, and down a long corridor, which diverged into several passages; here the retainers of the castle divided, some retreating one way some another; and though it was dangerous policy for Sir Walter's force to be divided, yet, in the heat or excitement of the conflict, they considered it not—Sir Walter, Wat, Michael, and others pursuing one band; John Chandos, Sir Giles Manny, and a little party following another; and Leowulf, the redoubtable smith, slashing and hacking at a number, another. He shouted and talked the same as ever, as he dealt his tremendous blows, and rushed on heedless whether he was encountering two hundred or two.

He was hammering away—for that is the only applicable term to his actions—at a quantity of foes, he did not know nor care how many, and was following them up, making terrible devastation with his bonny five-foot of fire-proof steel, when those he was fighting with retreated up a somewhat narrow flight of stairs. He did not intend to let them slip away so easily, and followed, cutting the one nearest to him down at one blow, as if he had felled a thin rail with a sledge hammer, at the same time asking his opinion of a true blade of unflawed metal. A death shriek was his only answer, and when the others heard it they fled as fast as possible. Leowulf followed them as hard as he could, and after a chase which, long-winded as he was, nearly robbed him of all his breath, he emerged on to the top of a turret, from which waved in a strong wind the banner of the house of the Bishop of Cambray; he found himself alone with half a dozen Frenchmen, but with plenty of room for the swing of his arm—the only thing he seemed to care for. He looked from one to the other for a moment, and then he closed the door which stood at the top of the stairs leading to the roof, and thus cut off a possibility of escape, either for himself or those with whom he was about to cope. Six to one were what is termed long odds, in a case like this, but Leowulf did not seem to think so; he gave a grim smile, and cried—

"Down, knaves, and cry quarter, or every man of ye shall leap from this place to eternity! down on your knees, rascals!"

But the rascals entertained an opinion that it would be a hard matter if six of them could not master one

man, although he did carry an enormous sword, and stood six feet three or four in height; they therefore did not go on their knees, or ask for quarter, or show any tokens of remaining passive, or proving obedient; but on finding that the closed door was an indication that they were to have the combat to themselves, they gave a loud shout, uttered a few hasty words to each other respecting the policy and the ease with which they would teach this Englishman the consequences of his temerity, and rushed at him.

"Ho! ho!" cried Leowulf, whirling his sword round his head with a preparatory flourish; "is that your game? well, with all my heart. Play away, my bold hearts, and let us see who grows tired first—not I, or my bonny blade, by the Mass!"

The first man who leaped upon him was cut down at a single blow—the weapon cutting with terrific force through his shoulder until it reached the middle of his chest; he gave an agonized shriek, and fell dead. As Leowulf recovered his weapon, he sprung back a few steps in order to get a fair sweep at the rest, who were together in a pack, and, being rather startled at the sudden and fearful death of their comrade, had for a moment paused. As Leowulf stood watching them with his sword over his shoulder, waiting for the next attack, he looked like a giant who could almost mow down armies at will. The Frenchmen, who did not actually want courage, had some such thought, and therefore hesitated how they approached him, until a chance placed some vulnerable part in their power to take advantage of, and they sidled round, hoping to find it. Leowulf surveyed them in intense scorn, and cried—

"Ho! ho!—what, do ye hang back, ye cowardly dogs? Five of ye fear to tackle a single man! that's not our fashion in merry England. Ho! ho!—I sicken at your white livers! Ho!—see, if ye will not have at me; here's at ye, dogs, though ye were five hundred!"

With these words he gave another flourish with his terrible weapon, and dashed at the fellows right gallantly. There was such tremendous strength in his arms, such a weight of metal in his weapon, which, withal, as has been repeatedly stated, was of such first-rate quality, that there was no resisting where it fell when he delivered it with his usual impetuosity. As it flashed in the air with a rapid whirl, the nearest retainer to it made a guard to receive it, for at him was it aimed, but vainly, for it descended, tore his weapon from his grasp as though he had held a sword of glass in his hand—the next instant it was in the air again, bearing the death warrant of the unfortunate man, ere he scarce knew he was disarmed. So rapidly had he been slain, that Leowulf was dashing at the remaining four with unabated vigour ere they were aware they had lost a second comrade; but as soon as they perceived it, they grew desperate from the tremendous state of their position, and attacking the smith with more union and intrepidity than they had yet shown, they gave him employment enough to prevent his making such short work as he had of the previous two, and, encouraged by this, the Frenchmen began to press him, and get him to a corner, where he could not have the full swing for his sword which its great length required; but he was not the man to suffer himself long to be penned up, although against such unequal odds, and making a desperate cut, he leaped forward into their very arms with such force that he tumbled one of the fellows backward; the others gave way, and he once more got a clear field for his labour. He threw not a moment away—again whirled his sword with a rapid movement round his head, flashing in the rays of the descending sun—its victim was marked out, and it fell, carrying death with it.

The Frenchman, upon whom it alighted, was cloven from the crown to the chine, and he was a breathless corpse ere Leowulf's bloody sword was waving in the air, hungry for the life of another foe. The retainers were cowed at the smith's awful success, and with one accord they cried for quarter, throwing down their arms, being fully satisfied that if it was not in the power of six to conquer this fearful man, it was quite impossible for three to manage it. Leowulf granted it, for he disdained to take the slightest advantage; he looked at them, as he leaned upon his tall sword, and wiped the perspiration from his brow, with the most extreme contempt, and uttering a scornful laugh, exclaimed—

"Are ye not doughty knaves? six of ye to a single man, and yet obliged to cry quarter! Where were ye reared, ye knights of the white liver! Now, by the Mass, France should be ashamed to own thee, for she has gallant hearts among her sons, and she would, did she but know of your base cowardice. Ho! ho!—now would I rather be cut to pieces by contesting inch for inch of ground with a dozen fellows whose hearts each in courage excelled six of thine, than be a cousin six hundred times removed to either of three who cry quarter to a single man. Faugh! take your lives—but an' ye were of my mind ye would get the first hempen cord handy, and make tassels of yourselves from the nearest beam you can find. Ho! ho!—these men who have fallen are worth a hundred such as thee, and shall each have a soldier's grave; but as for ye—um! I will discover what is meanest among women's work, and set ye upon it. Ho! ho!—and right fit employment truly."

The bold smith, when he had concluded, prepared to keep his promise with the dead Frenchman, but as sounds of conflict still rung in his ears, and he concluded his services might be needed in it, he determined to cast the bodies from the ramparts to the ground below, and then he would be less likely to break his resolve than if they were still there; so gathering up the weapons of the dead and of the living in a heap, and laying his own down near him, he proceeded, coolly, to fling the bodies over the ramparts; and as he cast the third, his ear caught the sound of a hasty proposition made by one of the retainers who had cried for quarter, to spring upon him now he was unarmed, and hurl him over the battlements; it was acceded to, and he turned round just in time to catch the ringleader by the neck and waist-belt, and the next instant the fellow was flying the very road he had proposed sending Leowulf. His scream rose up loud in the air, but he went tumbling to his doom. The second was seized in the same way, and though a strong man, he found it impossible to cope with the smith's enormous strength, and over he went, but he clung frantically to Leowulf's shoulder and the edge of the battlement, and as Leowulf had the other fellow to encounter, he could not shake him off, and he hung there between life and death, shrieking for help and mercy, while his comrade at arms, in a maddened excitement, death staring him in the face any way, with an anelas in his hand, attacked Leowulf with impetuous fury; but the smith, with a dash of his arm, knocked aside the blow as it was aimed at him, and seized the Frenchman by the throat. He had made the observation to Wat Tyler, when anticipating the attack of Grif of the Bloody Hand upon the village of Brenchley, that he had oftentimes wondered which could hold hardest, his vice or him, and by the grip he had of his oppo-

nent's throat, it seemed that he had good reason for making such a remark.

When he began to tighten his first hold, the man essayed to strike him another blow with his dagger, but the compression increased so rapidly and so powerfully, that his eyeballs almost started out of their sockets, his strength deserted him, and his arm fell powerless to his side. Instead of repeating his blow, he did his best to remove Leowulf's hand from about his throat, but he might as well have tried to pull up a huge tree by the roots single-handed: he felt all the agonies of being throttled, and had no power to help himself. The smith's left hand found out also the throat of the man who still clung to him, making vain efforts to raise himself up to the ramparts again, but the terrible grip of the smith banished all hope, and the miserable man, tortured by the dreadful sensation of suffocation which he endured, removed his hand from Leowulf's shoulder in his agony, and was at once cast down headlong from that terrible height; and his body had not reached the green turf beneath ere it was followed by his comrade, leaving Leowulf standing alone upon the turret with nothing living or moving near him, save the banner which, with the arms of the Bishop of Cambray emblazoned upon it, still waved proudly to and fro. The smith surveyed the scene for a moment, then tore down the gay flag, staff and all, and cast it the same path which his late foes had gone. He then raised his bonny blade, and inspecting it carefully, to see that it had not received any damage, shouldered it, opened the door which communicated with the stairs, and coolly descended to see where next his strong arm and good sword would be acceptable.

In the meanwhile Wat, with Michael on his heels, dashed forward after the flying retainers, who, as they fled, opposed ineffectual swords to their pursuers. The cries of fright, of defiance, of agony, of triumph, and death, rung through the castle. Some portions of the soldiers belonging to the castle fought desperately, disputing with the fiercest courage and obstinacy every inch they yielded, and made the oaken corridors and floorings wet and slippery with their best blood; others trusted to active legs for preservation, and some made a slight resistance for mere show, then threw down their arms and fled. In pursuing a number of the stamp just mentioned, Wat gained a gallery leading evidently, from its width and ornamentings, to the principal suite of chambers; but though he had been nimble and active in pursuing those who fled before him, their better knowledge of the locality enabled them to distance him, and when he reached the gallery they were out of sight, although their retreating footsteps still sounded in his ears; he darted on, closely followed by Michael, and was suddenly startled by loud and protracted shrieks from a chamber connected with the gallery; his first thoughts were that some of the troop, maddened by their excitement, had forgotten Sir Walter Manny's strict injunction, and were perpetrating outrage upon some of the females; he remembered that the gallant knight had vowed that whoever he caught in the act of disobeying his order, should fall by his hand, even though it were his brother, and with such countenance to second his efforts, he inwardly resolved that his hand should not fall lightly upon whoever he found disobeying the command so strongly impressed upon them by Sir Walter Manny. He easily found in which chamber the wrong was being done, from the shrieks following each other in loud and rapid succession, as well as from the clash of swords.

"Come along, Michael," he cried, in a short but decided tone; "here may be work for us to do among our own people, and we shall find that tougher than any we have had since we quitted our good King Edward; but we must not heed that. Sir Walter's orders must and shall be enforced while I can wag an arm."

"On with you!" returned Michael; "where you go I go, where you strike I strike; my heart and my hand are yours, whether to a May meeting or to the arms of death; and if the work be a little tougher than usual it will be all the better, and make up for the run we have had after these faint-hearted nimble-heeled rascals. By heaven! what a shriek!" he suddenly cried, as a scream shriller than any they had heard, burst upon their ears.

"Now, by the Holy Mother!" roared Wat, "but he who caused that shriek need have a strong arm and a stout heart, for it will be no light bout I will play with him."

"If there be no fewer than half a dozen I dont care," ejaculated Michael; "one or two will be child's play," he added, with a laugh.

But Wat's brow did not unbend, or the flush upon it abate, and he dashed into a large room at the top of his speed, as he heard a loud rough voice rising above the shrieks, exclaim,—

"I'll have you, though the foul fiend and his whole host stood up to prevent me; friend or foe matters not; if you are to be a victim, better to a friend with thy will than to a foe against it. Your struggles are vain, fool; you shall be mine, I swear."

As he entered he saw the maiden, who had been with her youthful brother escorted to the castle, struggling in the rude embrace of one of their own retainers, four or five of whom were busy plundering plate and other valuables, and a few others in fiercely assaulting an elderly man and the maiden's youthful brother, who, with a courage beyond his years, was making a brave stand against the villany of those whose duty it was to preserve them. Upon the floor lay the bleeding body of a white-haired old man, and near him, kneeling with clasped hands upraised, was the maiden's mother, shrieking prayers for help from heaven; a few frightened maidens were huddled together in a corner, and were about to be subjected to the brutal violence of those who were engaged at plunder, when Wat and Michael made their appearance. When our hero saw, which he did at a glance, the real position of affairs, he felt an immense weight relieved from his chest to find none of his own party mingled among the perpetrators of the outrage; and his war-cry burst from him with tenfold energy, when he found he had but to do battle with these mercenary faithless rascals. He was in a moment at the maiden's side, shouting in a voice that made the room echo back the sound almost as clearly as it was given—

"A Manny!—a Manny! to the rescue!"

He seized the villain who still held her with a firm grasp, and dashed his fist in his face with such terrible force that the blood spouted forth in a stream, and uttering a fierce cry of pain, the knave released the maiden, who flew to her mother instantly; and he was hurled like lightning to the floor, with a violence which made the room shake again, and he laid there clove to the chine, with nearly every bone in his body dislocated. The rest of the fellows were startled by the sudden entrance of Wat and Michael, and paused for a moment to see the easy manner Wat disposed of his first antagonist; but as the two friends gave them no time to reflect ere their swords were flashing round their heads, they commenced a desperate contest, in which they had seemingly every chance of proving victors, being so far superior in numbers; but though

they had young opponents, they had well practised and right fearless ones; and there they stood back to back, as undauntedly as if they had but each a single foe to oppose, possessing a determination never to go out of that room but as conquerors. A short time they fought, and three or four were severely wounded by them, and, as yet, they had not received a wound in return. The elderly man and the youth stood aloof, watching the combat with no little interest; both parties were foes to them, and they feared either proving conquerors; yet they could not but admire the cool unflinching gallantry with which these two unassisted youths kept at bay, and seemed likely to conquer, against such odds. At this moment a head was poked into the room, and there arose from its owner a loud laugh, and his rich voice exclaimed—

"Ho! ho!—right well and truly; hurrah for the little county and the little village, Kent and Brenchley! Aha! you dogs, always fighting against odds. Ho! ho!—your hearts are like my bonny blade, as true and as well tempered! Ho! ho!—well, ye have eight or ten to two—well, if a single man, a Saxon, and a true smith, who has made light work of half-a-dozen of such scarecrows as ye have fronting ye, comes to your aid, it will be but just, and as the game is not yet over, there'll be no harm in joining the sport till it finishes. Ho! ho!—my bonny Wat, my gallant Michael, here's an arm and heart with and for ye, you young fighting villains!"

"Hurrah, Leowulf," cried Wat, "thy bonny blade will give us an easy victory."

Wat prophesied correctly, for no sooner did the smith get his tremendous weapon into play—and he wielded it as easily as a stout dragoon flourishes his sabre—than the effects were experienced most fearfully. He mowed down all who attempted to oppose him like chaff, and none of them having too much courage, or what little they did have not being of an enduring nature, viewed the havoc which the smith made with eyes of considerable uneasiness; and as his acts were assisted so spiritedly by Wat and Michael, neither of them exhibiting the smallest symptom of giving way or relinquishing the fight, they began to conceive that as they could not escape, and had a very slight chance of winning, they would be consulting prudence to surrender, and, in accepting their lives, swallow their chagrin at being compelled to yield to a third of their number. The first man who cried for quarter was followed by the remainder, and they threw down their arms simultaneously. Mercy was granted to them, though they denied it to others, and had acted so outrageously against all honour and duty: however, Leowulf, who had already had a lesson of the faith to be placed in their submission, took care to see that every one surrendered his weapons, and then proceeded to bind them with whatever he found handy, while Wat addressed the elderly man, who with the youth by his side still stood with their swords drawn, and requested of him in mild terms to yield up his sword, as resistance he could perceive would be madness. He was listened to quietly, and his auditor replied—

"I am the Governor of this castle; there lies the body of my father, bleeding, senseless, for aught I know—dead. Here are my wife and children, and I will confess that we were in a moment of extreme peril, from the villany of my own people, when your appearance, for a time, changed the aspect of affairs. Your energy and boldness saved my innocent girl from a fate worse than the vilest death—for that I thank you. But I have yet to learn that she is safe from the fate from which you rescued her—have yet to know that you will not attempt the same injury which you cut down yon hound for striving to accomplish; if such is your intention, my own sword shall find its way to her heart ere you can lay a dishonourable finger upon her, and my own life shall be cast away ere you obtain my sword, and then you must cut it from my hand."

"I have heard you patiently," replied Wat, in respectful tones, "for I honour your sentiments; but I trust you will do us the justice to believe we are incapable of the villany which you fear, when I solemnly assure you I would have served the best soldier in our troop—my dearest friend though he had been—as he whom I slew, had I alighted upon him engaged in such a vile deed. No! we fight beneath the banner of Sir Walter Manny, the brightest, most honourable preux chevalier and chivalric knight under heaven, and the expedition which led us to attack your castle was not one of plunder, or of violation, but simply a deed of chivalry, an undertaking of pure honour, and the man in our troop who should infringe one of the bright laws of unstained honour, if he be not cut down in the act, will be visited with the direst disgrace and infamy which can be inflicted upon him. Rest assured, Sir Governor, that your lady, your daughter, and the humblest female of your household, will remain unharmed so long as one of our number remain here."

"I am satisfied," responded the Governor. "The name of Sir Walter Manny, 'the flower of chivalry,' is a sufficient guarantee that if I am in the power of an enemy, it is at least in that of an honourable one, and that maiden or dame will not suffer violence while he is near. There, young man, is my sword—I had hoped that it would never have left my possession in such a fashion, but we cannot rule our fate, and I must do as many others higher and nobler than myself have done—yield to circumstances. You are young, I perceive, by your features, but your frame, your bearing, your speech, and your bravery, are those of a man of whom nature might proudly hold up her head, and say, 'this is my work;' nor think I flatter, for I am not in the mood to make smooth speeches to one to whom I am compelled to yield the weapon I hoped death alone would make me part with."

There was too much sincerity, sad earnestness, in the words of the Governor for Wat to doubt their truth, and he felt affected by them. He had held out his hand to receive the sword, but he drew it gently back again, and said—

"I feel proud of your praise, for I believe your love of honour would make you scorn to utter words which you knew to be untrue. I am young, I acknowledge, but not too young, I trust, to pluck honour from any height or through any hazard; but though squire to Sir Walter Manny, and in such affinity to him, his deputy, I am too young to receive the sword of one old and high in honour as yourself—I will, therefore, with your permission, conduct you to Sir Walter, and to his hands you can render your sword, or if you will give me your word to remain here until my return, I will fetch him hither, if iit so please you."

"I wonder not at Sir Walter Manny's bright successes, when he has such followers as thee," exclaimed the Governor earnestly. "I thank thee most heartily for thy consideration, and will accept thine offer. I will await Sir Walter here, but my son shall accompany you, and he shall bear orders for such of my men as still contest the fight to lay down their arms. Go, François," he added, turning to his son; "you hear my wishes, comply with them."

His young son bowed and followed Wat, who quitted the room, making a salutation to the Governor as he went out. Michael was about to follow him, but he bade him remain; he obeyed, and seated himself by Leowulf, who had completed his task of binding the men, and was just thinking what he should do with them. The Governor surveyed the prisoners for a moment, and then exclaimed—

"Tell me, my gallant fellow, how many does thy troop number?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed Leowulf; "enough to carry a castle stronger than this, defeat a band four times its number, or do any deed which common men would deem impossible. What say you, Michael, eh?"

"Aye," returned Michael; "provided Sir Walter Manny and Wat Tyler were our leaders."

"But what is the number in round figures?" asked the Governor.

"We numbered forty and one as we reached here," returned Leowulf; "but there was a boy, who is too young and tender to wield a sword, and he has kept out of the way by the postern—so say forty as gallant hearts as ever beat beneath hauberk or leathern surcoat."

"No more than forty!" exclaimed the Governor, in the greatest astonishment.

"We found them enough to frighten the garrison at Montaigne," said Michael, with a slight laugh, "to carry the castle of Bouchain after a tough skirmish, and to make ourselves masters of this same Thin-l'Evêque."

"And my garrison consists of three hundred men-at-arms and archers," exclaimed the Governor, pressing his brow with his clenched hand.

Soon after this Sir Walter Manny entered, accompanied by Wat, John Chandos, Sir Giles Manny, and the greater part of his stern warriors; he bowed to the Governor, and advanced to him with a pleasant smile, which the Governor found it difficult to respond to, saying—

"My gallant squire informs me that you but wait my presence to yield up your sword to me. I regret that so noble and gallant a gentleman as the brother of the Lord Bishop of Cambray should be fated to part thus with a weapon he has always borne so gallantly for his king, and so honourably for himself; but it is the fortune of war, and the highest, the noblest, the brightest, and bravest, meet with reverses as well as the humblest."

"If the pain I feel in surrendering it," exclaimed the Governor, "and Sir Walter Manny's own sense of the value attached to an undefeated weapon will tell him that the pain is not very slight, can be lightened, it is to think that my weapon, which has never known a dishonourable stain, is yielded up to him whom chivalry hath owned for her brightest son. There it is, Sir Walter! With my sword I yield to you my castle and all it contains, save the persons of my wife and children; from whom, whether it be thy policy to make me remain captive here, or bear me to Edward's camp, I trust thy generosity will not separate me, and to the agony of a shameful defeat by a mere sprinkling of brave soldiers, add that of keeping me from those who are the only motives which bind me to life."

"Far be it from me," exclaimed Sir Walter, "to add one pang to the pain which a brave man must feel at being conquered by an inferior force. No! you and your family are free to depart to Cambray; nor do I wish a lionine as ransom, but the position of this castle renders it necessary it should be retained in Edward's service, and garrisoned by his own troops; I must therefore plant the Lion of England upon its walls, and take possession of it; but while your lady and your children are in it, you shall receive the same courtesy and respect as when you were governor of it."

"I am greatly indebted to your generosity," exclaimed the Governor, much moved. "But I might have expected no less from Sir Walter Manny. I am also a great debtor to your youthful squire, and shame be upon me if I forget to mention it, and that in the terms it deserves. A party of knaves in my pay, wearing my livery, but without the courage to make a stand against thy victorious followers, burst into this chamber for pillage and for violation. I was compelled—with the feeble aid of my own boy, whose strength, unequal to his courage, forbade him making stout use of a good sword—to defend myself and gentle daughter against the villainy of those who should have shed their base blood in defence of me. My arm against a dozen would have availed nothing, though I fought desperately to save her, had not thy squire, followed by a bold companion, burst into the room, rescued her, and cut down the base hound as a mower would a blade of grass, and then, backed only by yon stout youth, fought the whole number right manfully, until the arrival of a third stalwart comrade with a huge two-handed sword; and these three, without aid—for I, deeming that I had more if possible to fear from them than I had from my own people, stood on, an excited but motionless spectator—stood against yon villains, who were aided by those who lie dead near you. They defeated and took them prisoners; after which, your squire, on ascertaining who I was, with a delicacy equal to the highest station, spared me the mortification of surrendering my sword to any but the leader of this extraordinary, but brilliantly chivalrous attack of a handful of men against a strong castle, garrisoned with nearly ten times their number. Truly, Sir Walter, you had need be as proud of thy followers, as thy deeds, for they are worthy of each other; and if your squire will accept of this golden cross for having saved my child, he will be giving me great pleasure, albeit, I am well assured he had no light hand in making my castle pass from my hands."

"Now, by the Holy Rood, it is a pity that such a noble mind should meet with defeat, and a marvel that he should have had the misfortune to have such cowardly dogs for followers!" exclaimed Sir Walter, in a half soliloquy; then speaking aloud, he said: "Your praise of my bold squire is not, I am well satisfied, undeserved, and he will accept the gift you generously proffer with no little pride I will answer, coming, as it does, from one vanquished—a token of the noble deed done by the vanquisher. Ah, well! Wat, you have a knack of doing everything which helps to make a squire, a true, honourable, high, and chivalric knight, and in addition to the gift of the noble Governor, here is a warm grasp of my hand. The feats you have done in this room are not the only gallant ones you have performed to-day, as my eyes can testify;" and as he concluded, he shook Wat warmly by the hand, while the Governor drew from about his neck a richly chased golden cross, enriched with many gems; it was attached to a gold chain, and he placed it over Wat's head. The blood rushed up into our hero's face, and his heart glowed like fire—he would have said something, but his feelings were too strong, and he could only bow, and drew back. Sir Walter Manny continued speaking to the Governor, and John Chandos laid his hand upon Wat's arm, and whispered—

"Now, 'fore Heaven! Wat Tyler, but you are the luckiest villain in all Christendom; you have not

only the good fortune to possess a stout arm, a good skill, and a heart that would laugh to scorn a danger the foul fiend himself would shrug up his shoulders and run from, frightened out of his horns and tail, but fortune must, after thus endowing you, throw all her favours in your way, even every opportunity of signalising yourself. By the Mass! I shall have little chance against you for my spurs; here have I been slashing away at a troop of cowardly rascals until my arm aches, and though they cried for quarter, yet I got no good by it, for I had always a lot of fellows at my back to second me, while you pop down a different passage to me, and of course plump into a room where a damsel is being rudely treated by a dozen fellows, and your good fortune, as usual, gives you only one friend to back you: what could you wish for more? there was glory before you in good earnest—gloriously you went in for it, and gloriously you came out of it, and there hangs your glory round your neck, while I have not earned so much as, if it could be put into form and shape like your gold cross, would cover the half of Edward's eye in one of his portraits upon his smallest coin. Out upon Fortune, she's a jade!"

"Never rail on Fortune," exclaimed Wat, with a smile, "she has been and will be a good friend to thee, I can foresee; thou'rt nearer thy spurs than I, as thou knowest, for I have some good three years to serve ere I am of an age eligible to become a knight, and thou'rt close upon thy majority. I am fortunate, I acknowledge, and am zealous to deserve my spurs by the time I am old enough to wear them, which is the principal secret of such success as I have hitherto met with; but you, who have already earned nobly what you will in right of birth shortly receive, have no need to envy me the opportunity which Fortune throws in my path to compensate for a want of nobility of birth, or to fling harsh words at the blind goddess, because she hath produced thee from a high family, and hath endowed thee with all the gifts a man can desire."

"Not she—there is one gift she has denied me, and that is the hand of a certain maiden: and for that unkindness I will never forgive her," replied John Chandos, in an under tone, but with a sad earnestness; "but let the jade do her worst, I care not! that one disappointment hath made me reckless, and though it may give Edward a servant who will fear or care for no danger under heaven, who will throw himself wherever death is most prodigal of his shafts, it will also give him one whose heart is a void—whose hopes are blank—are quite gone. Think not, my bold friend, I envy you your gallant deeds—my speech was but a sally. Ambition is dead within me: nay, never shake your head and look so serious and sympathetic; I am not, and don't intend to be—sad and dull, but shall wear the same aspect, the same bearing as ever, until the true lance of a bold hand puts me to sleep with my forefathers. I'll tell you, Wat, what my feelings are: When I first entered the army, I looked forward to be a knight that posterity would be proud to have upon its records; as one who accomplished the bravest deeds without a flaw upon his escutcheon, and I made a pretty fair venture for it. But when I saw the maiden my heart acknowledged for its mistress, I felt that I should strive to gain the pinnacle I was aiming at for her sake, not for my own, and when her refusal fell like a thunderbolt upon me, it drove away from my soul all desire to become what Sir Walter is now: and so far from envying thee the spurs, Wat, I shall be happy to lay my head, never to lift it more, upon the field on which you win them. St. John, my patron saint, be witness for me that I speak truth."

"Never think thus, John Chandos," replied Wat, earnestly, "you will yet meet with one who will be a lode-star to thee, for whose sweet sake thou wilt be glad to gather laurels, and to win thy knighthood ere it is thine by right of birth and age. Ambition dead within thee!—an, it be so, honour is in Sir Walter Manny; strength, honesty, and courage, in our bold friend the smith, or truth in the bonny blade he battles with! Give me thy hand, John Chandos. Look you: as sure as I squeeze it now, so sure will John Chandos be what he first set his heart upon, a knight *sans peur, sans reproche*—and this will he be despite all his vanished ambition, his destruction of hopes, his void heart; give thee a field filled with gallant men, blows and perils as thick as hail, and the laurel wreath of victory to be gained but by one hand, there would be none present who would strive more daringly, more perseveringly to gain it than thee, and yet you would tell me that you care not but to breathe thy last where I win my spurs. Tush, John Chandos, shake off this weakness; there are bright eyes and fair forms who may be served and won by thee, yet—"

"Never, Wat!" interrupted the squire, vehemently, and then added, quietly, "but let it pass; what I have said is so, and your friendly efforts to persuade me differently I can thank heartily, but they will not change my conviction on the point. Sir Walter observes us, let us change the subject."

And with an ease and lightness of bearing, he commenced talking lightly on the successes of the day: he was interrupted by Sir Walter Manny, who gave orders to them both, to each take a party of men, and search through the castle for concealed foes, that their possession of the castle might remain undisputed. They obeyed; and, accompanied by Michael, Leowulf, and twenty men, they went over the castle, and found many who had secreted themselves; they made them all prisoners, and then confined them until Sir Walter's pleasure should be known. When the castle, with the exception of the keep, had been scrutinized, they came to the guard-house in which so large a number of the garrison had been entrapped by the smith, and held a parley with their inmates, made them acquainted with their success, promising them safety and good treatment if they surrendered quietly, and certain death or slavery if they proved intractable. Unacquainted with the number of Sir Walter's troop, and penned up like rats in a cage, they had no alternative but to submit to the best terms they could get, and they were not long in acceding to the offer which promised them safety for submission. Leowulf then unfastened the chain, the door was unlocked, and the door opened only sufficient to allow one to pass out at a time. Wat Tyler and his companions crowded round the opening to make their number appear much larger than it really was, and as every prisoner appeared, he was divested of his arms, and led out into the court-yard. When nearly a hundred and fifty men had made their appearance from the guard-house, the last arrived and was placed with his fellows, disarmed. Some murmurings arose among them, to find themselves the prisoners of so few, and they exhibited tokens of resisting the order given them to march towards the ramparts for the purpose of imprisoning them in various dungeons until it was decided what should be done with them; but Leowulf began waving his huge sword, and exclaimed—

"An' thou dost not march quietly without a murmur, I will bring a hundred fellows about thy ears,

who shall so whip thee into obedience with their steel rods, that thou had'st better have thrust thy thick pates into hornets' nests, than have not gone quietly to thy kennels. Ho! ho! fight if you will, an you have the courage, fight knaves; your comrades would not, and if you will, we may have some sport for our conquest yet; but an' you would not be mowed down as the reaper fells his corn, ye will walk quietly to the cells which are waiting patiently to receive thee. Ho! ho! wilt thou fight, dogs?"

The "dogs" were moved by his words to a milder train of thought and action, and having the fear of an hundred armed men before their eyes, they murmured no more, but suffered themselves to be led to imprisonment like sheep to a fold. Thus the castle of Thin-l'Evêque became completely in the possession of Sir Walter Manny, and well might he and the gallant hearts who accompanied him feel proud of the conquest, for save his brilliant deeds in aid of the beautiful and courageous Countess of Montfort, there stands naught upon record so noble and chivalric as this achievement. The knight spent the next day in making arrangements for the departure of the Governor and his family; for the forwarding of his prisoners, save a number who agreed to enter Edward's service, and those with a portion of his own men he intended to leave under the command of his brother, Sir Giles Manny, whom he made Governor of the castle, foreseeing that in case of the storming af the City of Cambray by Edward, it would prove of great utility. And when all his arrangements were completed, he prepared to return to Edward, who was staying at Mechlin; and adcordingly, upon the morning of the second day after his conquest of the castle, set out on his journey, accompanied by Wat Tyler, Rubacelle (who had, during the attack upon the castle, kept aloof, and when it was over joined Wat), Michael, John Chandos, Leowulf, Mark Grayling, and ten of the troop; the remainder were left with his brother until he could send him a reinforcement, which he purposed doing immediately upon his arrival at Mechlin. He did not seek any fresh enterprize as he returned, and when he reached Mechlin, which he was but a short time accomplishing, he appeared in Edward's presence, and related all the matters connected with his enterprise in modest terms; but Edward was not blind to its full merits, and failed not to shew him how highly he estimated it, by making him rich presents, and himself giving a glowing relation of it to all the lords and nobles who surrounded him; the knight, and all who accompanied him, were looked upon with eyes of wonder and admiration, and found a rich reward for their gallant daring in the warm praise and laudings which resounded on all sides.

Soon after their arrival at Mechlin, the King of England, attended by Sir Walter Manny, went from thence to Brussels, to the Duke of Brabant, and then demanded a decided answer respecting his intentions, whether he meant to be for or against him; and the Duke, finding he could not shuffle or evade any longer, replied, that as soon as Cambray was besieged, which was to be Edward's first act in the ensuing war, he would join him with twelve hundred men-at-arms. Edward, satisfied with this answer, quitted him, and after passing through Niveile, where he staid a night, Mons, in Hainault, where he remained two days with the young Count of Hainault and his uncle, then proceeded to Valenciennes, and went through the ceremony of demanding possession of the city of Cambray from the Bishop, who did not make his appearance, and also demanded the aid of the Earl of Hainault, which was responded to by the Earl with the word "willingly." The following day the king quitted for Hapre on the Selle, where he staid two days, until the whole of his army passed by; he then departed, and came to the city of Cambray, which, with the whole of his immense army, he surrounded and prepared to attack.

CHAPTER II.

"The Queen of Forests all, that west of Severn lie;
Her broad and bushy top Dean holdeth up so high,
The lesser are not seen, she is so tall and large."

DRAYTON.

"Their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood;
The nodding horrour of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger."

MILTON.

"Their troop came hard upon our back
With their long gallop which can tire
The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire:
Where'er we flew they followed on." BYRON.

"She comes unlooked for." POPE.

THE progress of Violet and Flora, with their male companions, on their way to Gloucestershire was slow, but sure. Every precaution was taken by Ethelbert, that all such comfort as could be procured for them were secured, and after a long and tedious journey, they arrived at the outskirts of the dreaded Forest of Dean, and now commenced the most dangerous part of their journey.

The forest was known to be inhabited by a numerous band of marauders of most desperate and ruthless characters; but it also contained a number of miners and smiths, who though a rough and uncouth race of men, were yet esteemed honest and independent: with these two classes of inhabitants feuds and skirmishes were not infrequent.

The miners were a race of free men who had immunities and privileges, of which they were proud and very tenacious; and though their subsistence was scanty, and earned with much labour, yet they neither committed depredations nor deeds which would have placed them upon a footing with the lawless villains who, for the sake of plunder, took up their abode in this very extensive wood. So long as the marauders did not interfere with the miners, peace was preserved, but if any of the robbers illtreated a miner, or any of the female members of his family, the whole community took it up and revenged it; and as the sturdy workers in iron were not easily daunted, or satisfied with a slight skirmish, the marauders were glad to come to an understanding, in which it was agreed that neither was to molest the other, and in case of the agreement being infringed or violated by any member of either party, the one guilty of the breach was to be given up to the other party to be dealt with as they thought fit. In spite of all their endeavours, the robbers could not keep anything like peace, and at last it was agreed they should retire to another part of the forest—and they did, but not to such a distance as to prevent all communication between them.

Ulph assumed the office of guide to our little party, and in that capacity acquitted himself with considerable success throughout the day, for during their progress they encountered neither human being nor wild animal; but as night drew on, and they were

still moving slowly among the thick trees, he grew anxious and fidgetty, and ever and anon made them wait for a few minutes, and then proceed at a snail's pace, while he crawled and stole along, looking with eyes brightened and sharpened by fear, into every recess he approached, and listened with the most intense attention to every sound which his keen sense told him was neither the rustle of a leaf nor the moan of the wind. This crawling pace grew excessively irksome to Ethelbert, and he could scarce retain his impatience as the little fearful guide frequently paused to catch whether he heard the footstep of a man or the growl of a wolf, but a dead silence reigned around, and every pause seemed only to be rewarded by the satisfaction that there was nothing near which made occasion for it. For some time Ethelbert bore this manner of progressing without interfering, but with a fretful impatience which forboded he would not submit to it much longer; and accordingly, when the pauses began to grow more frequent, and their advancement almost a matter of imagination, and the darkness was increasing rapidly, Ethelbert said to Ulph—

"I'll submit no longer to this miserable crawling pace; an encounter with a whole band of wolves or the tribe of ruffians who infest this place would be less painful than this perpetual expectation of an enemy every second step. Proceed quicker, cautiously, if thou wilt, but move on quicker thou shalt."

"Hush! hush!" cried Ulph in his excitement, almost placing his hand before Ethelbert's mouth, and speaking in a whisper, "you'll bring the whole band upon us in a trice if you talk in that loud tone; you don't know how these alleys convey sound—I do; your voice, if you continued, would be heard half a mile off, and then we should have the robbers at our heels. We are just between them and the wolves, and I hardly know which are worst—we must be very, very careful, or we shall fall victims either to one or the other."

"Oh, pray don't talk at all, and let us stop ten thousand times rather than we should become a prey to either," whispered Flora earnestly.

"And how long shall we have to go on in this fashion?" inquired Ethelbert, with moody impatience in his tone and manner.

"The whole night; it will be daylight when we reach the little huts of the miners, and then we may rest safely, sure of hospitality and protection."

"Humph!" exclaimed Ethelbert, not better pleased with the answer than with the progress; "proceed, but at a little quicker pace, whatever the consequence; if you are frightened at your own shadow, it is no reason why we should suffer by your weakness."

"With a set of men worse than devils on one hand, and a pack of hungry fierce wolves on the other," exclaimed Ulph, emphatically, "and a very little chance of escaping either, is to my thinking enough to make a man who has no great desire to fall into their clutches, alarmed at his own shadow."

"Go on with thee, without more words," exclaimed Ethelbert, sternly, "and whatever thy expectations, keep them within thine own breast; the maidens have quite enough to alarm them as it is, without having their fears added to by thy foolish words."

Thus admonished, Ulph proceeded, and although he tried with right good will to put in practice Ethelbert's command to advance at an increased speed, he found it rather a difficult matter, and Ethelbert chafed and fumed at being almost every moment checked to catch a sound of the approach of aught that might arise above the tramp of their horses' feet: they were rather startled as they went on slowly, by Flora's steed, which was the most high-blooded of all there, the same one which had conveyed her to Exmoor, suddenly throwing back its ears, snorting, and growing restive, trying to gallop forward, notwithstanding her efforts with the rein to check it; its muscles quivered, and it trembled its every nerve—it was evidently alarmed at something, and its fear was speedily caught by the rest of the animals, who all began to exhibit the same desire to advance forward at their best speed, yet there was no sound or indication that there was anything near to cause this extraordinary alarm, which the animals evidently betrayed; it was in vain that their riders tried to restrain their fury; they leaped, and plunged, and resisted every effort of controul. At this moment a young man, in the garb of a forester, suddenly burst through a thicket in the greatest haste; Ethelbert, although scarce able to keep his seat upon his rearing horse, drew his long knife, and prepared to attack the new comer, but his hand was stayed, by the stranger shouting in a loud voice—

"What are ye? travellers who have lost your way? or are ye mad, that ye stay here waiting for your destruction?"

"What mean ye?" inquired Ethelbert, quickly; "we are travellers, but we have not lost our way, neither are we mad that we move thus gently—there is a riddle in thy words: explain."

"Know ye not that a pack of at least an hundred wolves have scented ye, and are on your trail," replied the young man with great earnestness; "see ye not ye'r beasts are aware of their approach?—whip and spur, for ye have not a moment to spare, and give me a seat upon your steed or I must take the aid of a tall tree to save my life, doubting too, whether it will give me protection."

"Who and what are you?" inquired Ethelbert.

"I am a free miner and smith," replied the man; "my name is Benulph, and if you escape the wolves I can save you from the maintainers; answer quickly, for neither you nor I have one minute to play with; will you give me a seat on the back of your steed? he is strong enough for both."

"Are you the son of Hartulf, the smith and spear-head forger, nine miles westward of this spot?" asked Ulph, with eagerness.

"You have named my father," replied the young man, looking rather suprised: "dost thou know him, that his name runs so glibly on thy tongue?"

"I do; the forest of Dean owns not an honester man," cried Ulph; "on to my steed, good Benulph, and lead us where thou wilt; here are gentle ones to save, and nothing must he spared to save them, we will trust ourselves to thy guidance: we are safe with him, good Ethelbert; up with thee, Benulph—hark! what was that?"

"By Heaven! the wolves are closer than I deemed, and bolder too; look ye," shouted Benulph, "sit firm, and follow me; ye'r steeds will need neither whip nor spur until they grow weary, for well they know the devils are after them; give the beasts their head—away! away!

While uttering this speech he sprang up into Ulph's saddle, having made him alight, and then get up behind him; he put the horse's head in a certain direction, and then giving it a sudden lash, it flew off at its greatest speed, followed by the rest of the party at a furious pace; the steeds stretched out their necks, and needed no urging, for their instinct made them aware of the blood-thirsty foes following them, and they dashed away at a pace which in the mazy nature of the place seemed absolutely frightful; after a few minutes had elapsed, Benulph suddenly shouted, as a figure flew by him on horseback—

"Holy mother! that maiden's steed has the speed of an arrow: ho! keep the right hand path, maiden; tug at the bridle as though you'd snap his jaw like a dried twig. Heigh! this beast is a good one, but the other has rare mettle truly; bravely done, maiden," he cried, as he saw Flora clear a thicket which grew in her path, and which her steed bounded over rather than submit to be guided round it; "right gallantly and bravely was that leap made. By the white fire of smelting ore! but we had need use both whip and spur to keep pace with yon gallant maiden. Aha!" he suddenly shouted, upon hearing the howl of several wolves rise upon the air, "push your beasts forward; ho! the bloody-minded brutes hang on our heels, and will be on our back ere we get shelter, unless we make greater head than this against them. By the smithy of my forefathers! but there rose the voices of enough of those hungry yelping devils to make a lunch of an army. Heigh! heigh! faster for your lives—use the lash, 'tis better your steeds drop dead in carrying you safe than you should keep them slack and sacrifice your own lives as well as theirs. Heigh! would to Woden we were all on the backs of such steeds as yon maiden! By the Holy mass! she looks like a flying angel, and the noble beast seems proud of his burden.—Ah, howl on ye hellhounds, ye'll not have ye'r supper off us—spur, spur, bury your spurs in the flanks of the steeds!"

Thus shouting and talking, he urged on the steed he bestrode, and those who were behind him, to follow faster. Flora's steed, impatient of all control or rivalry, instinctively alarmed at the sanguinary brutes in chase, and seemingly animated by the desire to place its fair burden out of danger, no sooner had its head given to it, when they all started to escape the wolves, than it darted past every one, and kept on a-head, resisting in a great degree all the efforts Flora made to lessen its speed; she was almost as much frightened to be so far first as she would have been to be last; it was in vain that she tried to allow Benulph to overtake her; by great exertion and pulling, she succeeded in reining her steed in a little, but no sooner did the clatter of his horse's feet reach the ears of hers, than away he flew, and placed the same distance between them as before; however, Benulph was enabled to give her directions how to proceed, and she followed them with great exactness as well as promptitude.

"Whither do you purpose leading us?" shouted Ethelbert to Benulph, on finding their path grew very intricate, and the fast approaching darkness made it very difficult to thread; "are you taking us to the dwelling of your father?"

"I wish I had the chance," roared Benulph in reply; "but before we could get half way there we should be in the embrace of the villains chasing us; no! we must seek a nearer refuge than that; there is a hut not far from here, of tolerable size, which, if we can gain, will hold us secure until daylight scares the brutes away. There's room for the horses too if we can get them in in time, but I almost fear it—these devils are going almost two feet to our one."

"Hallo! look there," cried Ulph, pointing in the direction they were leaving; "I can see half a dozen of them in full tear after us; I say, Benulph, whip the beast, he is going very slow."

"Look to the maiden by your side," shouted Benulph to Ethelbert, pointing to Violet, after he had satisfied himself that Ulph had spoken the truth; "urge on her steed, and let her get before me—her life is precious."

"So are all our lives, good Benulph," whispered Ulph, nudging the miner, and giving the steed an extra kick; "let us keep first, and she can come as close as ever she likes behind us: you know self-preservation is—"

"Why, you selfish rogue," cried Benulph energetically; "an' I thought thou didst mean that, or thought that thou didst deem thy paltry life of more account than one so fair, I would take thee by the neckpiece and drop thee from the steed as a meal for the first wolf that comes up with thee."

"I did but jest, good Benulph!" exclaimed Ulph quickly, with a feeble attempt at a laugh.

"It is well for thee thou didst," replied the miner, "else had this hour been thy last."

And much to the trepidation of the frightened cowherd, he by force pulled up his steed so as to suffer Violet and Halbert to pass him, while Ethelbert and his servant brought up the rear. The wolves were now approaching frightfully close—their howls and yells rang in the ears of the fugitives like death knells, and the horses, fatigued by their long journey, but dreadfully alarmed at the approach of so deadly an enemy to them, kept on at the top of their speed while the least particle of strength remained in them. There was as yet no signs of the hut of which the miner had spoken, and the wolves had gained upon them, until between forty and fifty of them were scarce more than a hundred yards behind; the terrible brutes barked and howled as if they had already got possession of their victims, and the poor horses snorted with fright and pain, redoubling their speed to get clear of their ruthless pursuers; at this critical moment the servant's horse stumbled and fell. With the speed of lightning Ethelbert stooped down, caught the man by the collar and lifted him up into his saddle, and the horse, which he gave up for lost, sprang to his feet just as a wolf, the foremost, pounced upon him; but he kicked out with such force, that it dashed out its brains, and uttering a cry almost like a woman's shriek, he galloped after his companions, though without a rider, and was speedily by the side of Ethelbert again; the man caught him by the bridle, but they were going too fast for him to get upon his back again, and in this manner they continued for half a mile further unpursued, for the wolves were for a short time stayed by the fall of their comrade, whom they tore in pieces and devoured; they were not long in accomplishing this feat, for there was so numerous a company to partake of the snack, and in consequence, each one's share was but small; their comrade having been disposed of in the shortest possible space of time, they continued their chase, but by the time they started, our little party were close upon the hut—they speedily gained it, and were able to get their horses safely in and the doors fastened strongly, ere the pattering feet of the wolves were heard without.

The hut had originally been built as a sort of forest-keeper's lodge, but it was deserted; it was capacious, consisting of two tolerably sized rooms—the inner or smaller one served as a stable for the horses, and had evidently been used for the same purpose before. On questioning Benulph, it appeared that the building was well known to the miners who travelled in that direction, and it was the custom to leave fodder for the next comer in case of emergency, and there had fortunately been a quantity left when our party arrived, which was of the greatest value, for the beasts were quite fagged after their hard pace. The miner, aided by Ethelbert's servant and Ulph, rubbed them down and fed them, while Ethelbert, with Halbert, set themselves to the task of keeping up

the spirits of Violet and Flora, a task which, as far as the latter was concerned, was rather difficult, for nothing could persuade her but that they had been spared through all their dangers to become materials for a supper for a large party of wolves; however, although so frightened she had scarcely power to articulate a word, she kept close to Violet, with the resolve of dying together if their time was come, and as the howling and scratching at the door of the wolves, as they raised themselves up, sniffing at the crevices, licking their chops, kept continually in her ears, she could not divest herself of the idea that before morning they should be no more.

"Ah, Violet," she whispered, as she huddled close to her, putting her arm round her waist, and laying her head upon her shoulder, "wouldn't it have been a wise plan if, instead of coming all this way to seek for your parents, your foster-father had sent a messenger to fetch them to you; there were plenty of lads in Brenchley would have been glad to have gone; and see what a vast deal of trouble and fright, and perhaps a violent death, we should have saved, if we had only thought of that, shouldn't we?—Oh dear! oh, Violet, we shall never leave here alive—we shall never see Brenchley any more, never—never—never—see—any—any—body else—a—gain—but die—die—here, in this lonely—p—place;" she ended, sobbing so bitterly, that what more she said became inaudible. Violet kissed her, and bade her cheer up, and trust in Heaven, which had never yet deserted them, and would not now. Poor Violet needed consolation almost as much as the simple-hearted girl who was weeping upon her shoulder, for her hopes of escape were not much brighter than Flora's, but she concealed her feelings for fear that Halbert should be pained, and feel the dangerous position in which they were placed more keenly than he would were he to see her calm and resigned; she, therefore, in her attempts to sooth her timid friend, endeavoured to display a firmness and a strength of mind she was very far from feeling. There were some rough settles in the house, and they seated themselves upon them, while the others were tending the horses; in a short time Benulph, accompanied by Ulph and Gilbert, the serving man, came from the inner room and exclaimed—

"There, the tired beasts are carefully served—now we will attend to ourselves; come, cheer up; although the villains do keep up such a villanous song without, never fear, we are not destined to be their prey; come, I will get thee a light, and as there is some provision in your saddle bags, and I have a flask of wine, we'll have a dainty supper, while those hungry dogs outside shall give us some music as we eat."

As he concluded he drew a flint from his pouch, and striking it against the blade of an axe he carried with him, upon some light dry twigs which he found, he soon kindled a flame, and lighted a small torch formed of pine wood, steeped in fluid bitumen; it threw a broad, red glare around, and lighted up the apartment, and shewed it to be, though a desolate-looking place, yet, under the present circumstances, a most friendly shelter.

"There!" cried Benulph, when he had got the torch alight, "there is comfort number one; I'll soon have another in the shape of a good fire; I think there is a great deal of companionship in a fire."

A startling shriek from Flora interrupted him, and he started to his feet on seeing her point to the opening which in the day time admitted light; it was narrow, but divided into two by an upright bar of iron; to this opening a wolf had clambered, and thrusting himself with enormous strength against the iron bar, it gave way. Just as Flora, who had heard his attempts to squeeze in, caught sight of him, and shrieked, he leaped into the room. The maidens fled screaming, and he was in an instant attacked by Ethelbert, while Benulph rushed to the window as the head of another made its appearance, and clove it in twain with his axe; it fell back dead; he then seized the bar of iron, restored it to its place, and fastened it temporarily with his poignard; and came to the assistance of Ethelbert, who with a firm hold of the wolf by the throat, was stabbing him repeatedly: a blow of the Miner's axe decided the conflict, and the brute lay stretched, weltering in his blood, dead upon the ground; he was no sooner destroyed, than Benulph exclaimed—

"That damned disaster will be the ruin of us unless we contrive to frighten the blood-thirsty vermin away; they'll be up at the window in shoals, and as that iron bar stands, it will be of no more use than an old reed—they'll have it down in a trice, and pour in over each other's backs, so that there'll be no keeping them at bay—by the Lord, here they come too!"

As he spoke, up leaped a wolf to the window; the Miner sprung forward and dashed the torch in his eyes; the brute howled with pain, and dropped down again, and Benulph shouted—

"By the sledge of Vulcan! a thought has struck me. Here, friend, take my axe, and keep guard at this window; you'll have plenty of work to do; and then if I do not frighten the villains away, my name is not Benulph."

Ethelbert took his axe and stood by the window, prepared to use it upon the skull of the first that appeared, while Benulph, going up to a corner of the apartment, brought to light a small barrel which contained the resinous gum of pine trees, and gathering together a quantity of dried leaves and twigs, he covered them with it; and when he had finished, he rubbed his hands gleefully together, and said—

"Now you shall see a rare contrivance. I wonder what possessed my thick head not to have thought of it at first. Ah! that's right, hit with hearty good-will—every one dead is one less against us," he said, as Ethelbert made a desperate blow at a wolf who appeared at the window, and hurled him back again.

"You see," continued the Miner coolly, "this gum is placed here in case of wet weather, because the fuel gets wet, and by the help of this stuff we can light it again, for it blazes most mightily. Now I intend to set fire to this bunch of pine gum and twigs, drop it on to the first rascal that makes his appearance, and it will stick to him until it is all burnt away, and take every bit of hair off him into the bargain—it will singe no few others too, and frighten them from hence I'll wager my head."

He gathered it up, and learning from Ethelbert that three or four wolves were making desperate efforts to get in at the window, he came to his side, set fire to it, and directly it blazed up, he clapped it firmly on the back of the foremost fellow who had his fore-paws over the ledge of the window, and was trying to thrust his head between the bar and the side—he then hit him a rap with the flat end of the axe and thrust him back. The turpentine in the gum made it blaze up fiercely, and the wolf, on finding what sort of companion he had to his back, uttered a terrific howl, in which he was accompanied by the whole of his companions, who naturally horribly afraid of fire, were rather alarmed at the sight of their illuminated brother, and as the resinous matter waxed hot, and the hair of his coat began to kindle, it soon grew painful as well as terrifying, and he played a series of antics and evolutions which, as he rushed among his

companions, set many of them on fire too; the gum stuck steadily and blazed furiously, and notwithstanding he tried all sorts of ways to get rid of it, it kept its place immoveably. He howled and yelled, twisted and turned, flung himself here and there, but the fire still burned steadily on his back, and his brethren roared and howled at the strange sight as loudly and continuously as he did at the scorching agony he suffered. The uproar they made excited the laughter of the Miner, but the fears of the rest of the party; for although it was evident the manœuvre had somewhat astonished the troop of brutes, it had not succeeded in dispersing them; they could hear still their pattering feet as they raced to and fro, and their loud cries had by no means diminished enough to give them hopes that they would retire to a distance sufficient to enable them to make their escape. Several times they heard the unfortunate wight who bore the unquenchable fire upon his back jump violently against the door in his frantic leaps, and at last he grew still, but the rest of the brutes kept up with the utmost pertinacity their long howls, and their impatient perambulations in front of the hut. The smoke and strong smell which arose from the ignited resinous matter had filled the apartment in which the party were domiciled, and made the atmosphere anything but pleasant to inhale, or clear for the eye to penetrate; nor was the unpleasantness which this created lessened by a fire kindled by Benulph of pine logs and a torch also of the same material, which in throwing its red light over the party, threw also a vast quantity of black smoke; there was no chimney, and the door being fast, the small window was all the vent which the smoke had to escape, and it rolled out so slowly, much slower than it was formed, that it seemed highly probable, unless the fire was put out and the torch extinguished, the little party would run as much chance of suffocation as being torn to pieces by the wolves. Such were Ethelbert's speculations on the matter, and he lost no time in communicating his thoughts to Benulph, but the Miner laughed, and said—

"There's no occasion to fear being stifled; why bless thee, good friend, I've lived for months, aye, years in a smoke ten times thicker than this, and it never choked me."

"Very likely," replied Ethelbert, "but we have not, and there's the difference; the last years of my life have been passed in the pure free open air, and those who accompany me have lived always in an atmosphere as pure as this is foul."

"Yes," exclaimed Flora, whose fears would not let her lose a word of any conversation that transpired, "there was never anything like this in Brenchley, was there, Violet?"

Violet could scarcely reply in the negative, for the smoke increased so rapidly that it made her cough violently, and she was echoed by nearly all the rest; even Benulph began to find it oppressive.

"By all the smithies in Dean, but it grows too thick to swallow," he cried; "there's too much smoke to come from these pine logs alone—the beast must have laid himself by the door, and all the clouds from his back are coming through the crevices."

"Yes," said Flora, with some exertion, the smoke pouring down her throat the moment she opened her mouth; "I heard him, poor miserable wretch, he is laying there now—I heard him groan just now, and sighs; I can hear his back crackling now, as the fire burns it—it is very horrible."

"His back crackling!" echoed Benulph, hastily, "that's impossible, it would never make noise loud enough to be heard here;" and he moved quickly to the door, and then roared suddenly at the top of his voice, "Hell and Death! the damned brute has set fire to the door post—the hut is built of pine logs, and will burn furiously; we are lost, we must perish, for there is no escape."

"Is there no way to extinguish it?" cried Ethelbert.

"None! the wood will burn worse than if it was soaked in oil," he replied? "and if we open the door we shall be snapped up by the wolves ere we could cry God help us!"

"The brutes will not approach the flames!" exclaimed Ethelbert.

"No! but the moment we get out of the reach of the fire they will pounce upon us; they know that we are here as well as we do ourselves, and they'll wait here, too, until we are driven out by the flames, or until the morning shews them no vestige of the hut or us." Benulph was at this moment interrupted by the door-post and door itself bursting into flames. Both Violet and Flora shrieked with fright, and Ulph roared out with terror. The Miner, who stood close by the door, sprung back, and shouted—

"Here it comes!—the dry logs will lick up the flames as parched earth does rain, and the whole place will be down in a little while; unless God alone puts out His hand to help us, we must perish."

"I never despair until the last extremity," cried Ethelbert, with a sudden energy of voice and manner; "nor then, for if it is God's will, He can deliver us at the last moment. Is this the only way to get out?" he demanded, pointing to the door.

"Yes," replied Benulph, "and now, if we were to determine to run the hazard of encountering the wolves, we could not pass this door, blazing as it does; you would not get a horse to approach it, and to attempt to distance the wolves without the aid of your steeds, would be as hopeless as if you expected to escape this fire by lying upon the ground; I am not more afraid of death than any here, nor prone to despair where there is the slightest hope, but there is none here, and ye may commend yourselves to God, for your hour is come."

"Oh, I thought so," cried Flora, in terrified accents; "oh! dear, dear Violet, would that we had never quitted Brenchley! Oh, if Michael and Wat were here we should not perish now I am sure, although the danger is so frightful."

She hid her face upon Violet's shoulder, weeping ready to break her heart; and Violet, who was as white as marble, said not a word, but pressed her to her bosom and breathed a prayer to Heaven, fervently and earnestly, for the happiness of Wat Tyler—a prayer that he might bear her loss patiently, although he could never know what her fate had been—that in all things, at all times, he might be spared regret or pain, and never, never know the pang of agonized disappointment and blighted hope that was on her heart at that moment, for bitterly did she feel the separation for ever on earth from him, which the roaring flames seemed relentlessly to tell her must ensue. She did not fear to die—she had been too good, too sinless, to fear to meet the eye of her Maker—to look upon death as a terrible visitation, which would plunge her, if not into horrible punishment, at least into dreadful uncertainty, but rather looked upon it as the termination of a journey of cares and sorrows—an arrival at a land of joy, of happiness, and sweet contentment; it was not, therefore, that she viewed her fate as terrible for the mere destruction of her life, but that it involved the loss of Wat—of him she loved so entirely, so devotedly, and whom she should never, never see again. Her heart

and mind were filled with his image; and the heart of a young maiden—and such an one as her—is enthusiastic, albeit it is quiet enthusiasm, still it is enthusiasm; and though she said little concerning him, and made no display whatever of the affection she really bore him, yet he was to her what life is to the frame—without him the world was a mere machine to her, and she would sit for hours when unobserved, and think of him, and him alone; rehearse over and over again all the kind things he had said and done, all the essays he had made for her happiness—every look, word, act, was treasured up and remembered, dwelled on with fervour, bringing her always to the conclusion that there never was or could be on earth a being so good, so gentle, yet so brave and noble, so beloved as him; and now when the fierce fire was raging round her, the heat scorching her, and the thick volumes of smoke helping to perform the work the fire would make sure, her only thought and sorrow at quitting the world thus early in life was, that she would be parted from him for ever. She stood immoveable, Flora still clinging to her, her face ashy pale, but unable to shed a tear; her whole thoughts were upon Wat, and to him would she dedicate her last thought, her last prayer, and her last sigh.

Halbert Evesham addressed her in words which though they displayed firmness and resignation at his own situation, showed how painfully he felt her position; but his efforts to make her meet her death with resignation to the will of heaven, were unheard, unheeded—her whole thoughts were on, and for Wat Tyler.

Ethelbert, although the danger was so imminent, was not lightly going to lay down and die, because there appeared to be no chance of escape, and he therefore bestirred himself to invent some plan which might release them; there was not an instant to spare, and he racked his brain for an idea, and presently exclaimed to Benulph—

"You have an axe, cannot we cut our way out at the back of the other apartment?"

"We will try," returned the Miner, "but the fire will be a faster workman than you or I, and I suspect before we can get through a single log it will be at our backs."

"No matter, we must try it—it is our only chance," cried Ethelbert; and followed by the Miner and the remainder of the party—for the fire and smoke were making the room untenable—they went into the apartment which held the horses. The poor animals were quite aware of the approach of the fire; they trembled and snorted, and seemed overcome with terror; and when the Miner and Ethelbert entered, two or three of them whinnied, as if craving for assistance. Fortunately the hut had been built for many years, and had been deserted from its dilapidated state; and the apartment they were now in was by far the worst of the two, many of the logs being old and tottering. When the Miner took up the axe, and began to use it with great dexterity and speed, Ethelbert observed that every cut he gave shook the logs as though it would more easily knock it out of its place than cut it through, and he mentioned it to Benulph.

"Aye," replied the Miner, still working rapidly with his axe, "the first blow I gave told me that, but we must have something to knock them down with, and there is nothing weighty enough until we get one of these logs, and then we must batter away with it for dear life."

His axe was a very small one, but he made the chips fly in all directions; he cut up and down, and was very soon more than half through the upright log. The fire in the meantime was making fearful ravages—the flames were roaring and crackling, the sparks were falling in showers, and the heat was growing intense; fortunately the wind was blowing in an opposite direction and carried away the smoke, or nothing would have prevented them being suffocated. They could hear the shrill howls of the wolves rising in the air; the sanguinary brutes were alarmed by the sight of the fire, but their scent of human blood was too keen for them to be induced to depart entirely. They heard as well the loud neigh of fright which the horses gave as the fire drew nearer and nearer, and that alone would have been motive sufficient for them to have remained.

The perspiration poured in torrents off the Miner as he, conscious of the rapid approach of the flames, made his axe fly like lightning against the pine log. He succeeded in cutting through it, and the next thing was to dislodge it from the roof; and to do this, he was held up by the serving man and Ethelbert. In giving a series of desperate cuts at the top of the log—for the smoke was blinding him as well as depriving him of breath—the handle of the axe broke short off by the head, which fell to the ground, and thus their only serviceable instrument was lost to them, for they had no implements to make a new handle, and no time if they had. Even Ethelbert's brow grew clouded at this disaster; but it was no time to flag or give way to despair, so with the assistance of Benulph, the servant, and Ulph, he endeavoured to drag the log from the roof. Desperation lent them all a strength beyond what they could commonly exercise, and the cracking log gave evidence that it was lent to them for some purpose. After repeated efforts it yielded, gave way, and ultimately they had it in their possession. This gave them a little encouragement, and holding it horizontally, they commenced with fresh vigour, using it as a battering ram; and as the flames increased, so did the necessity for their best exertions. The heat was growing intolerable, and the horses began to plunge and rear as the smoke came rolling into the apartments. Every instant they expected to see the flames rush in, for the cracking wood, as it spluttered and exploded, seemed to be but a yard or so from the door which separated them from the burning apartment, and with frantic exertion did they essay to break a way through for them to depart. They gave a shout of joy as they tumbled down the first log they had thus attacked, and perseveringly dashed at the next; it yielded in half the time the other had done, and thus there was room made for themselves to get out. Benulph was the first to rush through the narrow aperture, and run round to the front of the house; he returned the next instant, and said—

"The maidens may come out with safety, the blaze of the hut will keep every villain that is howling there from intruding upon us, and a few more dashes will break away an opening large enough to get the steeds through."

Violet and Flora were immediately led through the opening, and placed beyond the reach of the sparks, which fell in torrents around, and had set fire to three or four pine trees in front of the dwelling, a circumstance which tended to keep the wolves from strolling round to where they were making a passage for their horses, a fact which Flora, who had eyes for everything in the shape of danger, was not long in communicating to them. They worked hard to get more of the logs down, and their exertions were crowned with success; for, as it frequently happens in such cases, their first attack was made upon the strongest and stoutest log, and those they afterwards tackled they

found to be rotten, and with little difficulty broken down. They had hardly got the last down, which made room enough for the steeds to pass, when the flames caught the room they were in; the horses began to kick and plunge, and they had great difficulty to move them; however, by dint of perseverance and severe blows, they were enabled to get them through, and while Ulph, Halbert, and the serving man held them, Ethelbert and the Miner returned for their gear; in a short time they harnessed them, mounted them, and guided by Benulph, left the hut behind them, with a fervent prayer of thanks for their escape, accompanied by a hope that the wolves, occupied and dismayed by the fierce fire, would not discover them as they galloped away. The steeds were slightly refreshed by the rub down and feed they had had, but not sufficiently rested to go a long distance at anything like a pace, should it so happen that the wolves once more got upon their track. Benulph was very urgent for them to get forward quickly.

"Every step we take for the next hour," he said, "will be equal to a mile after that time; the wind, you see, is blowing from us to the vermin, and we must reach a long way a-head ere we get beyond their scent; so long as they keep in front of the fire so long are we safe, for the smell of the burning fire will out-scent anything; but should they come on this side of it, they will be on our heels before you could cry God speed us. They are cunning brutes, forsooth, and when they have once fastened on ye'r track ye need a quick pair of heels and a ready invention to get shut of them."

"Whither are you leading us?" asked Ethelbert.

"To my home, the dwelling place of my family these hundred years and more," returned Benulph.

"Is it far from hence?" enquired Ethelbert.

"A long six miles," was the reply.

"I am glad it is no further," he rejoined, "for the steeds are knocked up; they have had a long day, and they are finishing at a pace a good horse would find it difficult to keep up, starting fresh."

"Ah, but they know as well as you do that they are leaving wolves and fire behind them, two of their worst enemies," observed the miner; "and while there's a puff of breath in them, they will keep on as much for their own sakes as yours. Let me but get another mile between us and the blood-sucking devils and I care not."

As he finished his speech, Flora's steed gave a loud neigh, whether of joy at his escape, or whether to restore confidence to his companions, it would be difficult to say; but whatever the inducement, the neigh was clear and continued, containing a shake of great precision, and the last note dwelt on with great steadiness. He was replied to by both Ethelbert and Benulph's steeds, and they who did not possess such power of voice as did he, had scarcely ceased, when the long sharp howl of a wolf answered their little outburst. They threw back their ears and instantly increased their pace. The miner, passionately lashing the steed which he bestrode, cried out—

"Thou perverse beast—thou stupid, ignorant gull! thou dost deserve to be the food of the hungry devils thy cursed neigh hath brought after us. Mighty pleasant, truly, with so fair a chance of escape as we had, to be thrown again into the jaws of those unsparing thieves. Aye, put out your speed, ye may, but 'twill avail ye nothing—thou'rt doomed, and, what is worse, we too."

"You are too prone to expect the worst," exclaimed Ethelbert; "the wolves are not even in sight, and we have but a short distance to run for safety, if, as you say, a mile will place us out of jeopardy."

"And so it would," returned the miner, "if they had kept the other side of the fire until we had got over the mile; but now we shall have every inch of the six miles to scour over, with jaded steeds, too, and these devils have wind and fleetness which will take them unflagging the longest fifty miles ever passed over."

The wolves had heard the neigh of the horses, and two or three, more cunning than the rest, emboldened by starvation, had made a circuit round to the back of the hut, which they reached just as the neigh was delivered so elaborately by Flora's steed, and they were not long in scenting the steeds; as soon as they were scented, so soon were they again in full chase, followed by the rest, who quickly discovered the route their companions had taken. As the fugitives dashed round the wind of a narrow glade, which they were galloping over, they came unexpectedly upon a band of between fifty and sixty men on foot, who were advancing at a swift pace, and who, immediately they perceived the mounted party, drew across and stopped them. The leader of the men advanced and exclaimed in a loud voice—

"Whither go ye?"

"To my father's house at Taynetone," cried the Miner hastily, at the same time giving a pass-word; "these are guests of mine who accompany—I have sworn to protect them—we are followed by wolves, and in a minute or so they will be upon us; there's at least a hundred and fifty or two hundred of the hell kites."

His words were corroborated by a simultaneous burst of howls of the coming brutes, and the horses grew desperate at being checked—they reared and kicked, would not be held, and at length, in spite of all resistance, threw down the strangers who held their heads, breaking madly away, and galloped off: the strangers were about to pursue them, when Benulph, pulling up his steed with all his strength, roared out—

"Keep where you are, an' ye would not have all the miners in Dean against ye; they owe ye a grudge or so already, and if you follow to molest us, they shall turn out and hunt ye from covert to brake, until every man of ye is hung up on the boughs of the stoutest oaks; these friends of mine are now under the protection of the Free Miners and Foresters of Dean—ye will do well to respect them, and the man among ye who loves his head will do well not to lay a finger upon them." He kicked the sides of his horse hard as he uttered the last words, and gave him his head; the steed bounded away, and the next instant the freebooters were engaged in fierce attack with the whole tribe of wolves, of whose great proximity they were not aware, although they knew of their approach. As the shouts of the men, the clashing of their weapons, and the loud sound of a sort of gong reached the ears of the fugitives, Benulph laughed and exclaimed to Ethelbert, whom he had overtaken—

"Now we are safe: the thieving men are in battle array against the thieving wolves—thief to thief!—it will be a hard struggle for the mastery; no matter which wins, while they are fighting, we shall get clear from both. Cheer up, fair damsels! the danger is over, and ere another hour has passed over your heads, you will be sleeping quietly beneath my father's roof, where one rite of hospitality was never broken; and whatever your future destination, so long as you are in the Forest of Dean, so long will I answer for your safety."

"We are very much beholden to thee, my honest friend," returned Ethelbert, "and do thou but shew

me how I may make a return to thee, and trust me, if there is gratitude in man, you shall not pass unrequited."

"Oh yes," said Flora, "we will pray for you as long as we live, won't we, Violet? Indeed, I thought we must have perished in the flames, didn't you, Violet?"

"I had lost all hope, I confess," exclaimed Violet; "but you see there is hope in the last extremity, and though I did not possess it, I might have done so, and it would not have deceived me. For your kindness, worthy friend," she added, turning to Benulph, "whatever thanks words can express are thine, and whatever—"

"Tush, maiden," interrupted the Miner, "there is no need to thank me, my life was in as much danger as any of yours—what I did was as much for myself as for you; we were all in the mire, and we should have all sunk together, or, as we now have, escaped together; therefore keep your thanks until I have earned them. When you have passed safely through the forest, wherever your journey tends, and you prove me to keep my word of piloting you through, free from all attacks of any kind, then when you bid me good den, perhaps never to meet me again, if you should say, Miner, I thank thee, and should afterwards have an odd prayer or so to the Virgin to spare for a sinful man—for it's the prayers of such gentle ones as you which prevail with the Holy Mother—why you will reward me quite sufficient; so let us say no more about the matter, but keep our steeds to their work until we reach my old father's hearth, and there you will, I promise you, meet with a hearty welcome, and plenty on a well-served board, for ye to make a hearty supper."

As he concluded he gave his steed a lash and the rest followed his example. The steeds kept on bravely, though almost worn out, and ere half an hour had passed away, the signs of a village began to be apparent in the trees, which were hitherto so thickly studded, becoming wider apart, and then to their great delight a few straggling cottages shewed themselves; these were soon passed; they grew thicker, and at last Benulph drew up his steed before one of the largest dwellings, and leaping lightly from his saddle, exclaimed—

"Welcome, friends, to my father's house!"

He gave a few hasty blows at the door, and was answered by the appearance of a bluff, hearty-looking old man, whom the Miner instantly accosted.

"Father!" he cried, "I have brought ye some guests—travellers, who have great need of thy hospitality, for they have had a rare bout of troubles in the old wood."

"They are welcome to whatever my poor means can furnish, Benny," replied the old man; "I give ye good den, friends—make my dwelling thine until it behoves thee to depart; whatever it contains in the shape of couch or food is heartily at thy service; therefore enter and partake freely of whatever thy wants require."

Ethelbert thanked him and alighted—he assisted Violet and Flora to dismount, and they entered the dwelling, followed by Halbert and Ethelbert, while Ulph remained with the serving man and Benulph to tend the horses, which they led into a shed and carefully cleaned and fed; while the old man, attended by a daughter, a young and pretty girl, spread a table with refreshments, of which, after they had removed some of the effects of their travel, they all partook, finding the meal sweetened by the certainty of having escaped a danger so imminent as the one they were just delivered from. Benulph gave a brief but graphic description of it to his father, and related also their encounter with the freebooters, who, as he said, showed no inclination to suffer them to pass unmolested, although he had given the pass-word, and they had in a degree to thank the sudden arrival of the wolves for their escape from their hands.

"Ay! you had indeed to thank them," said the old man, "for there has been a quarrel among us and these thievish hounds. There will be a gathering of our freemen to-morrow or next day, and with pike and sword they will visit the haunts of the robbers, and drive them many miles hence, for they have determined they shall no longer be in our vicinity."

"What's in the wind, now?" inquired Benulph.

"It seems that May Farebelle was passing through the wood a mile or so west of this, and was met by five or six of these cut-throat rascals, who were half mad with drink, and although she bore the pass-word, would have much illused her had not her cousin Iron-Arm come up by accident and rescued her. The conflict between him and these villains was tremendous. He slew one; and the cries of May bringing two or three of our people to his assistance, they fled; but their leader, and a party with him, has been here to-day to demand reparation for the death of his follower, but we laughed him to scorn, and even in our turn insisted on atonement being made for the insult to the maiden. This they refused, and as they departed carried off Ada Cefeld and Blanche Fell—"

"Who?" cried Benulph, springing up suddenly, nearly upsetting the table in the act.

"Ada Cefeld and Blanche Fell," replied his father; "but thou need'st not alarm thyself, my son—they were not permitted to bear them far; for we expected they could not keep their hands from handling that which was not their own, and a sharp watch was kept upon them; so, as soon as the maidens were seized the alarm was given. A party of young fellows, headed by Iron-Arm, were soon upon their heels, and they rescued the maidens in a very short space of time, giving the rascals a rare trouncing."

"Would I had been with them," cried Benulph, with clenched hands and teeth; "I would I had; but no matter, I will go out with the miners to-morrow and make up for what I have missed to-day; the devilish scoundrels shall feel the weight of my hand, as well as Iron-Arm's, or I am no true son of Hartulf, the man without flaw."

"You had best not let Blanche know what you're going to do," said his sister with an arch smile, "or you'll not go at all."

"I don't care who knows it," replied Benulph, turning red, and giving his head a little toss; "it is not in the power of any body to stop me."

"Ah, don't say that, Benny," exclaimed his sister with a wicked laugh; "who was he that was going to the festival of St. Magdalene, at Hartbury, where there were so many pretty maidens who expected to see and dance with him, and laugh and have fine fun; but although he had fully determined to go and be merry, was stopped by the tears and petting, and leetle, leetle bit of jealousy of a young lass, who did not like to trust him there, because a sick mother prevented her going?—eh, who was that, Benny? will you tell me that?"

"Marry, will I," replied he, laughing good humouredly; "it was the brother of the maiden who cried ready to break her heart because she was kept at home through him, after she had made up her mind to go, and had promised to meet and dance, and laugh and have fine fun with a young fellow who expected her, and who wandered about like a hound that had lost its master—"

"Not a hound," cried his sister.

"Well, any creature that has lost its mate," he rejoined mirthfully. "Ah, well, I shall go, whatever you insinuate, and there will be no necessity for you to go chattering to any one about what I am going to do."

"Oh!" she cried, laughing and clapping her hands, "you will take my advice, then?"

"Perhaps I may," he answered, "and shall take Merry Merlin, the smith, with me."

"You won't," she replied, instantly looking serious.

"I shall," he replied.

"That I'm sure you won't," she exclaimed, nodding her head expressively.

"Won't I?—we shall see," he rejoined.

After a little more badinage the supper was cleared away, and couches were prepared for all. Right glad were the travellers to seek them, and court a repose their exertions and apprehension during their weary journey rendered so necessary. There was not one of the party who did not reap the full benefit of it; and the morning sun was considerably above the horizon before they made their appearance at the breakfast table. Violet and Flora were kindly attended by Benulph's sister Alwena; but the young Miner was abroad with some friends, making arrangements respecting the contest with the robbers, and their repast was finished ere he made his appearance; and then he told his father everything had been settled for a gathering of the smiths and miners in the afternoon; that they intended to make short but desperate work of their expedition, and to drive every rascal of the thieving fraternity a dozen miles from the spot, with the promise to hang up every one they caught within that distance, let his plea be what it might. They only waited for the sanction of Hartulf, who was the senior of the village—the richest and the most respected—strange to say, not for his wealth, but for his extreme probity and independence of character. He was one who had passed a long life without meanness, falsehood, or any dishonourable act, and through his admirable conduct had obtained for himself, among the sturdy honest miners and smiths, the designation of "the man without flaw." While the question was being discussed—the maidens were at this time absent from the room—a knock at the door announced the arrival of visitors. The permission to enter having been given, a tall man entered, wearing a hauberk of chain mail, which was covered with a surcoat of thick buckskin leather; he wore chaussés of the same material, and huge gauntlets; his face was covered with a profusion of dark hair, in the shape of whiskers, mustachios, and beard; and his scowling eyes, with low thick brows, and impatient mouth, showed him to be of a passionate and bad temper; he was accompanied by three others, who, like himself, were half in armour, half in leather, and the whole four were well armed. They had not been in the room a second when Ethelbert Evesham started, uttering an exclamation of surprise; but instantly coverering his face with his hands, so as to screen it from observation, he retired to the further end of the room during the conference. The first comer having advanced to where Hartulf was seated, threw his huge sword, which he carried loose in his hand, upon the table, and flung himself into a chair opposite to him. A pause for a moment ensued, and then Hartulf, in a voice singularly clear and firm, after eyeing him with his sharp bright eye for a moment, exclaimed—

"Your purpose in paying me this visit?"

"To know what hostage you mean to give me as an earnest of the reparation I am to have for my slain follower," was the reply, delivered in cool measured terms.

"The question was decided yesterday," replied Hartulf; "I should hardly believe you had forgotten it—a beaten hound does not speedily forget a sound lashing, particularly when he comes into the presence of those who have given it to him."

"Indeed!—you are witty of speech," replied the stranger sneeringly; "but it is the way with you elderly, self-sufficient, virtuous Christians—you treat all younger men than yourself as ignorant boys."

"I treat men as men, and rogues as rogues," rejoined Hartulf laconically; "do you complain of my treatment of you?"

"It moves me not—mine is not a spirit to be ruffled by the foolish whining of weak and childish old men," said the fellow, with cool indifference.

Benulph clapped his hand to his sword with a force that made it ring again, and his sword leaped half out of the scabbard, but his father placed his hand upon his arm, and ejaculated the single word—

"Benulph!"

The young miner instantly curbed his passion, and sheathed his weapon, though with little less vehemence than he had drawn it. As it returned clattering to its scabbard, the man who had occasioned the movement surveyed him with a cold, contemptuous smile, and said—

"Nor am I disturbed at the vapourings of a boy, though sparks do shew through the smoke of the mithy!"

"Look you, most redoubtable captain of a tribe of unhung knaves and villains!" exclaimed Benulph, speaking with forced calmness, "you are beneath my father's roof, and therefore safe from my hands."

"From thy hands!" echoed the captain, with a laugh of scorn.

"Aye! you grow white and trembling at matter much less to be feared, I well know; and I warn ye, thou hast cause to fear me; but for the present thou'rt safe; but were you beneath the broad blue sky—beneath any roof but this, I would wring thy nose from its place, and spit on thy ugly mazzard, to shew the contempt in which a vapouring boy holds such a scoundrel as thee."

The temper of the captain of the band of marauders might remain unmoved at what he termed the whining of an old man, or the vapouring of a boy, but it was not proof against the attack upon his personal appearance, and he leaped on his feet with his drawn dagger to repay the observation of the young Miner with a deadly blow; but his own companions interfered and stayed his hand, while Benulph remained firm and unmoved; but when the captain had again seated himself, he gave a bitter laugh, and said, jeeringly—

"Thine is not a spirit to be disturbed by the vapourings of a boy!"

The leader ground his teeth together as if he would reduce them to powder: he gnawed the hilt of his dagger, and the tips of the fingers of his gauntlet, in endeavours to restrain the violent rage that possessed him. He turned from Benulph with a look of withering hate, and addressed Hartulf—

"I wish not," he said, "to widen the breach that is between my people and thine, but thou art striving fast to make it irreparable; come, old man, meet me in the same spirit in which I have sought thee. I know thy word among the miners and smiths of this forest is law stronger than any of King Edward's counsellors ever framed, and they will do whatever you command, and do it cheerfully. The miner who slew my fellow infringed our agreement, because he waited not for judgment; if the maiden had been ill-used, the fellow should have been given up to you;

nay, the whole six—for, as you told me yesterday, six there were—but he took the adjudication in his own hands, and slew the offender—it was an act against all agreement, and therefore I expect justice from your hands, a handsome reparation, and a hostage until it is complied with."

"You shall have full justice," replied Hartulf. "Yesterday I told thee what I now tell thee—the first violation of the agreement commenced with thy people offering an infamous wrong to a young, timid, defenceless girl; a relative interferes and rescues her; and then thy people, not satisfied with one outrage, perpetrate another; for the six *gallantly* attacked the single man, one of whom he slew, and would, in all probability, have served the remainder the same, had not assistance arrived and made them fly. Then didst thou with thy rascals come hither upon a pretence of requesting reparation for a wrong committed by thy own followers, and perpetrated a third outrage by carrying off two females by force, for which thou and thy hounds were made to flee like frightened wolves. Go to—how dost thou dare show thy face here? Think ye, that because we are plain and simple people, we cannot appreciate and resent a wrong? I had thought we had taught thee better. I am mistaken; but thou shalt find that the next lesson you receive, you will not easily forget. Away with thee! and be prepared to quit this vicinity for at least a dozen miles, or to dangle from the branches of trees nearest thy haunt."

"I have heard thee quietly," replied the leader, "and I still make the demand. Thou hast a pretty daughter—I will be satisfied with her."

"No man, let him be e'er so great a scoundrel, ever received a blow beneath my father's roof," exclaimed Benulph, his eyes flashing fire; "but unless thou dost instantly depart, I will seize thee by the heels and hurl thee forth. When thou art across the threshold, I shall know how to treat thee."

"Heed him not, Benulph," said Hartulf, calmly; "the fang of a serpent need never be feared until it stings thee."

The leader honoured the young miner with a slow and maliciously sneering glance, but did not reply to to him. He, however, turned to Hartulf and continued—

"An' thou dost object to part with thy sweet daughter—thou hast two marvellously fair guests; I can be content with them."

The old man's eye kindled up as the leader uttered these words, and turning upon him with contracted brows, he exclaimed—

"But that my hearth was never desecrated by a foul act, or my hospitality ever broken, I would summon a few stout lads and have thee flung out of my house, and whipped through the village. Ungracious knave!"

"Say but the word, father," cried Benulph, earnestly, "and I seize him by the belt and neck-piece, and I fling him forth as I would the carcase of a dead wolf."

"This is mere childishness!" exclaimed the leader with a laugh of derision, as Benulph, with clenched hand, stood ready to pounce upon him the moment an assent left his father's lips. "Let us understand each other, friend Hartulf. My men have resolved, let the consequence be what it may, to have a recompense for the loss of a comrade. I have a friend here," he said, pointing to a companion, "who, for a very particular reason known to himself, wishes to have the company of the lady who has sojourned with you these last two or three years; deliver her up to him, and he will be answerable as well as myself, for the payment of your debt to the band. Now you have the whole matter and reason of my visit to-day, and I require an immediate answer. Let me advise thee to consent."

"What if I do not consent?" said Hartulf calmly.

"You may guess the consequences when I tell you my band is augmented to thrice its number, and they are determined to have compensation or be revenged."

"Let them do as they please, or rather as they can!" was Hartulf's rejoinder; "were they ten thousand times their number, I would answer as now I do—we scorn and defy them, and unless they remove at least a dozen miles from this spot, they will have but a short grace ere they swing in the wind from the arms of trees which have often sheltered them. I have done; our conference is ended; let me beg your immediate departure; your presence is irksome, and excites my disgust—your absence will give me considerable pleasure."

"Old man, your obstinacy will devote your village to flames—its youths and old men to slaughter, and its maids to strong arms and unsparing natures," exclaimed the leader; "pause ere you decide on your fate."

"My decisions are never made without a strong sense of their justice," replied Hartulf. "This matter requires not an instant's thought; it is not in thy power, nor in that of any one else to change me. Leave me; I fear neither thee nor thy band—let them do the worst they can. Away! I cannot look on thee and keep my calmness."

"Thou hast heard my father's decision," exclaimed Benulph, "thou may'st as well attempt to bend the most stubborn oak with a wave of thy hand, as hope to change his determination with any persuasion *thou* could'st use; thou hearest his desire that thou should'st quit his dwelling; linger not—for though it is painful to thrust any one from beneath a roof which ever affords shelter to those who need it, I will cast thee out like a reptile, an' thou tarriest longer."

As a dog shows his teeth ere he bites, so did the captain grin at Benulph; he said to Hartulf—

"Old fool! you'll bitterly repent your perverseness;" and turning again to the young Miner he said—

"That is my only answer to thee," at the same time struck him with the back of his hand across the mouth; he then departed from the room, followed by his companions; he was barely without the door when Benulph was at his elbow. He thrust the captain's comrades aside, and calling to the leader to defend himself, he struck him a tremendous blow in the face, which knocked him down like a shot. The fallen man, however, instantly rose to his feet, drew his sword, and rushed at Benulph mad with rage; the young Miner was prepared for him, and received his attack; but still raging under the effects of the blow he had received while in the house, he was scarcely so cool as it was prudent to be, and the clashing of the swords was almost enough to stun any one standing near. Hartulf, who with Ethelbert, was by their side as soon as they heard

"The clink and fall of swords,"

drew from his vest a whistle and blew it loudly; it was answered by the appearance of a dozen sturdy fellows running up, some armed with pikes, two or three with sledge hammers, and the rest with swords. A wave of the hand from Hartulf, and they separated the combatants.

Benulph was bleeding from a wound in the shoulder, and the captain from an ugly gash in the

cheek; a few words from Hartulf to his friends made them instantly disarm the thief and his companions, and then they were started, and lashed with stout thongs, until they were some distance in the forest. They made desperate resistance at first, but it availed them nothing, and they were at last, as a matter of policy, compelled to run at the top of their speed. Ethelbert had accompanied those who were inflicting the punishment, and when the miners had followed the robbers far into the wood, they returned; not so, Ethelbert, he kept on, although he made his progress unobserved by the fugitives; he glided from tree to tree, still following wherever they went, never once losing sight of them, nor suffering them to catch a glimpse of him, although, smarting with rage and pain, they frequently turned their heads to the path their pursuers had taken. At length, after proceeding some distance, and talking with great vehemence, evidently concerting schemes of the bitterest revenge, they separated; the chief and two of the men taking one path, and the third another. Upon this one man was the eye of Ethelbert fixed like a lynx, and suffering the three to pursue their way uncared for, he followed him closely, but still using the greatest precaution neither to be seen nor heard; in one hand he carried a sword, he wore another by his side, and he held both so that they should make no noise, nor impede his progress. He followed this man until they had at least journeyed three or four miles from the point where the chief had parted from him; and then, when in the centre of a very dreary lonely glade, dim, from the inability of the daylight to penetrate through the mass of foliage, he quitted his mode of keeping himself concealed, and increasing his speed he overtook the man he had followed, and suddenly confronted him. He had advanced over the grass so noiselessly, that he was unheard, and his appearance had the same effect as though a sprite had sprung unexpectedly from the earth; the man started back as if he had trodden upon a snake, and fixed his eyes upon Ethelbert with a frightened gaze, as though he was really looking upon a spectre; he, however, speedily recovered himself, and said haughtily—

"Why dost thou cross my path i' this fashion?"

"Dost thou not know me?" inquired Ethelbert sternly.

"No!" replied the man.

"Look upon my face again," he exclaimed.

"I know thee not," returned the stranger, looking at him steadily.

"Has time and sorrow so changed my features that *thou* should'st not recognise *me*," said Ethelbert emphatically.

"I have neither time nor inclination to spare in reading thy riddles, man," exclaimed the stranger haughtily;" whatever thou hast to speak, repeat it at once, nor keep me standing here as a fool while thou'rt propounding enigmas. I tell thee I know thee not, nor wish to know thee—knowest thou me?"

"Aye, for a black-hearted merciless villain!"

"How, fellow! what dost thou mean?"

"What I have said? that thou'rt a cold-blooded, remorseless, treacherous villain; and that thou or I shall never quit this glade alive. You see I have weapons with me; and look in my face, there you will see my resolve written without a hope or sign that I shall change it."

"Who and what are thou?

"Oh, you can ask me that question now," said Ethelbert, bitterly. "I am one who in youth had happiness showered upon me; I am now a bankrupt in everything pertaining to happiness — broken-hearted, blighted in every hope dearest to my heart, save one, and that is revenge; I have waded through blood to accomplish it—it is nearly consummated."

"What is that to me?" said the stranger.

"Everything, for thy blood will consummate my revenge."

"Mine?"

"Thine! I have told thee what I am, now will I tell thee *who* I am: know, Sir John Maltravers, that Ethelbert Evesham stands before you?"

"Hell and fiends! can this be true?"

"Look upon me once more, you cannot be deceived, however you may wish it—I am he; now hear me—you blasted my every hope, you withered my life in its spring time, even in the full tide of my happiness did you step in and sweep it all away with one remorseless act, a shameful deed against one who would have thrown away his life with a glad heart for thee; it was in vain that you laid your schemes cunningly, I discovered all—I found who had been the murderer of my happiness for ever, and determined upon a tremendous revenge; mark me, Sir John Maltravers, it was I who sought thy downfall, it was I who have hunted you from place to place until you found a short refuge here; I have caused the destruction of thy villanous companion in iniquity, William Ogle; I have seen thy only son die a dreadful death—"

"Great God! you do not speak truth; fiend! you cannot speak truth?"

"As surely as now I stand here I saw him perish; he had emulated thee in acts of villany, and they dragged him to perdition; he perished by the dagger of one he had employed to do a deed of blood, in the midst of the dark waters of a deep and rapid river—he sunk, covered with wounds, after having nearly become the prey of a fierce wolf, whom I had, when it quitted him, to encounter, and slew. Ere I had finished my contest with the brute, the waters were flowing silently on, and no ripple or mark to show that thy son was beneath its dark surface—"

"Horror!"

"And I tell thee, had he have escaped the dagger of his slayer, and gained the shore, he would have fallen by my hand."

"Bloody-minded villain! would nothing satiate thy remorseless revenge but his death?—had'st thou not enough to glut thee in my ruin and the downfall of my house? I did but abstract thy wife and no farther wrong did she suffer; she was beneath the protection of my wife, and as safe as though under thine own roof."

"I know every circumstance—all thy villany, and I have sworn to accomplish thy death—naught less will satisfy me; not but thy son's death has gladdened me, but that he deserved for his own deeds, not thine. I will hold no farther converse with thee—thou knowest my purpose, my motive for it, and inflexible determination to slay thee if in my power. I take no unfair advantage of thee; here is a sword—in this lonely place we shall be unmolested, and the survivor may take his way unstayed, wherever it may please him to go. Come on, and do thy best and worst—Heaven fail me in this hour if I spare thee!"

Sir John Maltravers took the sword which Ethelbert proffered him, and rejoined—

"I have had too terrible proofs of thy iron-heartedness to doubt thee, but thy remorseless determination shall not surpass mine, and if fortune should give me success, each thrust of my weapon shall be given in the name of him who through thee hath perished. Death or victory!—no quarter."

"None, not a grain of mercy from either to the other," exclaimed Ethelbert, opposing his sword to Sir John's.

They spoke not another word, but commenced their terrible contest, which was to end only with the death of one. They were both possessed of great courage, rendered more undauntable by the hate with which they regarded each other; the one vindictive beyond any mitigation for the wrongs he had suffered; the other, because he had been so fearfully retaliated upon; and when they crossed their swords to decide their mortal enmity, it was with a coolness and circumspection that evinced how deadly was their purpose, how unrelenting would the successful swordsman complete his victory by utterly destroying his defeated foe. Each eyed the other with the glance of a tiger who waits but a favourable opportunity to spring upon his victim and glut himself with his blood; they thrust at each other, parried, cut, and used every feint and stratagem calculated to give them an advantage. Thus they contested for some time, without either having obtained the slightest superiority of position; with their prolonged contest their blood heated, and made them, if possible, entertain more merciless intentions than they had hitherto: their fight waxed fiercer and hotter, and with their increased passion they both fought more wildly, advancing, retreating, rallying, and in turn pressing hard upon their antagonist. Several times would Sir John Maltravers have been severely wounded, but for his hauberk of chain mail; and Ethelbert, although he wore a concealed shirt of mail to protect his body, yet trusted rather to his dexterity and thorough knowledge of his weapon to avoid the wounds and death his opponent strove so strenuously to inflict upon him. They were both growing fatigued by their efforts, and each tried by some dexterous foil or powerful blow to put an end to the contest; but they were so equally matched, so exceedingly vigilant, and withal so expert, that a feint was never attempted but it was detected and met, so as to render it of no avail. The repeated failures each made in succeeding with their favourite stratagems exasperated their already enraged tempers to fury, and casting all the nicer points of device away, they proceeded to make their combat one of mere strength, and hacked at each other with every particle of vigour they had remaining. One stratagem more only did Ethelbert essay—he suddenly retreated rapidly; Sir John followed, eager to inflict the death-blow, but in his haste stumbled: it was fatal to him—that instant he received a terrific gash upon the throat, and the wound was followed by a thrust so fierce that the sword tore its way through the buckskin surcoat, hauberk, and passed through his body, the point coming out at his back. The sword was drawn out, and with a bitter growl of hate was passed again through him, and with a shriek the wretched man fell to the ground. Ethelbert stood over him, and as he waved his bloody sword in the air, he uttered a loud laugh of exultation, which was responded to by the dreadful groans from Sir John Maltravers, from whom the blood poured like water, and dyed the grass around him with its purple hue; his face became of ashy whiteness, and his lips a deep blue; his eye grew glassy, but he turned it upon Ethelbert, and with a strength which in his condition seemed superhuman, he raised himself upon his elbow, and said in a voice agony made thick and husky—

"Your revenge is complete; you have repaid the evil done you tenfold; you have wrought for years misery and wretchedness for me; you have destroyed my name, and have finished by taking my life. Have you not had full atonement for my guilty act?"

"I have! I have!" exclaimed Ethelbert, exultingly.

"Then tell me, as I am a dying man, hast thou told me truth about my son? has he perished as thou hast said?"

"He has," exclaimed Ethelbert; "so surely as thour't on the verge of death, he is slain; after seeking to perpetrate a wrong equal to the one thou didst crush my heart with, and slaying his dearest friend in the basest, most treacherous, cowardly fashion, I started up before him an instant after he had committed the murder, and tracked him from covet to thicket, until his doom was accomplished."

"Fiend! blood-thirsty, merciless monster!"

"You have the sin to answer for making me so; your deed changed my nature; you made me ruthless where I had none but kind thoughts; you have made me what I am, you have suffered for it, and will suffer yet in thy punishment hereafter."

"Oh God! death is crawling round my heart," groaned the dying man. "I am sick and cold—my eyes fail me; heartless vindictive wretch! may the curses I utter with my last breath, cling like a pestilence to thee; may they blast and wither thee to thy heart's core and drag thee down to eternal perdition! —oh, hell!—I—"

His words were stayed by a sudden thrust from Ethelbert's sword through his throat, and his eyes flashed like fire for a moment, with an expression which, stern and inflexible as Ethelbert was, made him shudder; but he did not withdraw his eyes, and soon he saw the film spread over them, the lid fall, the damp drops of death-dew stand thickly upon his forehead; the blood forsook all his features, a strong quiver ran through every muscle, then his jaw dropped, his spirit fled, and he lay upon the grass a dead man.

For a long while Ethelbert stood motionless, leaning upon his sword, his eyes fixed upon the dead man's face, as though there was something there from which he could not withdraw his eyes; at length he moved, and a powerful emotion seemed to pass through him—he fixed the point of his sword in the ground and then knelt before its cross hilt, his lips moving as if he was engaged in prayer deep and earnest; then his whole body shook as if he were in a convulsion; he buried his face in his hands, and the scalding tears forced their way through his fingers, while he bowed his head almost to the earth. The paroxysm had its way, and when it had subsided he arose, sheathed his sword, and without casting a look upon the body—which the carrion birds had already scented out and were wheeling and flying about, ready, when he had gone, to settle upon it—he departed from the spot.

He retraced his steps slowly and thoughtfully through the village; the sun was making rapid progress towards the horizon when he reached it, and as he was about to enter the honest Hartulf's dwelling, he encountered Benulph, who was just quitting it. Ethelbert stopped him and said—

"I have news for you."

"That you have, I will wager," cried the young miner, "for we have missed you these three hours; and as you followed so eagerly in the sport of licking those rascals from our village, I suppose you lost your way in the wood, and fell in with some adventure? I was just going to say a word or two about to-morrow to some friends, and then I was going to look for you."

"I had no need, you perceive, for your kindness," returned Ethelbert. "When did you purpose making your attack upon the marauders?"

"To-morrow."

"It must be done to-night, and that early, too."

"To-night! why?"

"I followed the fellows who were whipped from your homestead farther than any of ye, and I overheard them plan an attack upon this place at midnight."

"Are you sure of this?"

"As that I stand here! Lay what plans you please, but let them be done speedily and count upon my aid—I have been used to this sort of warfare, and may be of some service."

"Will you accompany me to meet my father, who is about to give his advice to the miners and smiths, beneath Edmund Ironside's oak, a short distance hence?

"I will," replied Ethelbert.

The young miner led the way, and Ethelbert followed him until they reached an enormous oak tree, beneath which, it was said, five hundred gallant miners had sworn to Edmund Ironside to fight for him and their country to the death, and nobly did they keep their oath. Hartulf was there, surrounded by a large number of sturdy men, both miners and smiths, who were listening with the most profound attention and greatest deference to his simple eloquence; he was exhorting them to be steady and firm of purpose in their intention of ridding the vicinity of freebooters; to shed no blood unnecessarily, but not to give ground before their foes an inch; to do as their forefathers had done, espouse the side of right and virtue, and maintain it unflinchingly with their best blood. When he had finished, and the heroes had uttered their applause, Benulph made Ethelbert's communication known, and he was himself appealed to for further information; in his turn he addressed the assembled hardy men, and knowing what their natures were, he used such arguments, although but few, that they were moved to attempt the most desperate enterprise. They rewarded him with acclamations, agreed to his propositions, and he was, with Benulph, chosen to head them in their expedition.

When twilight came, fifty men, with hands and hearts of iron, with courage as immoveable as a rock of adamant, quitted the village, and plunged into the recesses of the wood; they were led by Ethelbert and the young miner. Their progress was rapid but silent, and in their faces might be read that they were engaged in some deed which required a bold heart, a quick eye, and a ready hand; they possessed them all, and though they were grave and stern, yet there was an expression of cheerfulness with it, that shewed their gravity was not akin to moroseness. They kept on steadily until they arrived in a spot crowded with trees of all species, and underwood of all sizes and growth; by Ethelbert's advice, they stopped here, and secreted themselves—lying flat on the earth beneath the brushwood gorse and the thickets with which the place was covered. Without uttering the slightest sound, they remained there, waiting the approach of the robbers, and so motionless were they, that birds came and sought their nests, unconscious of the presence of human beings; the rustle of the leaves, as the light wind moved them to and fro, and the low moan the hollow places gave forth, were the only sounds that could be heard in that lonely spot. The moon had not reached so high in the heavens as to appear over the tree tops, when the quick ears of the concealed miners detected the tread of approaching feet—the hum of voices rose on the air, and soon a large party of men appeared; they were all well armed, but straggling here and there without order or arrangement, and were engaged in ribald discourse, making the glades echo with their rude and boisterous laughter; as they reached the coverts containing the miners, they were startled by a loud hurrah, and before they had time to recover from it, the hardy iron-workers rose up suddenly like a band of spectres from the earth, and dashed at them vigorously—even furiously, but in such good order and concert, that their first charge swept the free-booters before them like a flock of frightened sheep. With a leader of the character of Ethelbert, used to warfare, cognizant of the character of the villains he had to cope with, the miners were not likely to lose the advantage which their unexpected assault had given them; he seemed possessed with an utter disregard of all danger, a recklessness of life which seemed to set the greatest hazards at defiance; where the fight was thickest, there was he—where there existed a point of danger, where numbers pressed upon a few of the bold smiths, he flung himself among them,

"Commanding, aiding, animating all,
Where foe appeared to press, or friend to fall,"

there might he be seen fighting with a stern fury, which scorned all impediment, and laughed at death; he was well seconded by the miners and smiths, who did their work steadily and unflinchingly, meeting blows, which rained about them as thick as hail, with a sturdiness and immoveability, as though they were of the same nature as their own anvils—with this difference, that though they bore the attacks with iron-like firmness, they did not fail to return them with interest.

It is an established fact—indeed amongst foreign nations little less than a proverb—"that a true Englishman never knows when he is beaten." Your true game Briton never gives in, he fights on to the last; no matter whether he has any chance of winning left, while he has life and strength, however little the last may be, he will not cry "peccavi," but as tough as the oak, of which he is so justly proud, he fights as unflinchingly as if victory was just about to declare itself in his favour. He may not be possessed with the enthusiastic excitement which will lead him to dash here and there, as if he were possessed of the devils named Legion, who entered the swine, and "ran violently down a steep place into the lake," albeit English soldiers have made as brilliant and dashing charges as those of any nation in the world—but he will stand his ground against all odds, and will only understand himself beaten when his back is to the earth, his face to the sky, and he is rendered powerless to move a hand or foot, or his spirit has fled to Him who gave it.

It is the character of the people, and has been from time immemorial. English sailors are the first men upon record who nailed their colours to the mast, and went down to "glory," as they emphatically term death, rather than be prisoners to an enemy they could not conquer. The English oak, the English bull-dog, and the Englishman, are types of each other — where the first takes root it grows and flourishes, and keeps its stand until it rots piece by piece, mouldering, after all its leaves are gone never to return, until its

"Branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity,"

into touchwood, but still clinging to the earth to the last; and who ever knew an English bull-dog quit his hold until the object was torn from its grip? Who does not know—and barbarous as it appears, it has been tried—that the thorough-bred bull-dog will suffer its limbs to be hewn from it rather than quit its hold when it has once made a firm pin? As these two exhibit their unshakeable tenacity, so does your thorough-bred Englishman—he will stand his ground, as the vulgar adage hath it "through thick and

thin;" you may beat him, but there he stands—you may deprive him of all possibility of success, but still there he stands, unless he is, with all hopes of victory, deprived of power to move, or of life.

The smiths and miners engaged in the conflict were of this immoveable character; they had made up their minds to drive the freebooters from the vicinity, and never for one moment fancied that they might be unable to accomplish it; it never struck them that they might be defeated, either by numbers, superiority in the use of their weapons, or any stratagem, by the success of which the fate of battles is too frequently decided; indeed, they had but one thought on the matter, and that was to drive the robbers from their neighbourhood as they would dislodge any tribe of vermin that had taken up their abode too near to be pleasant; therefore, when they found themselves opposed to nearly twice their number, they heeded it not a jot, but proceeded to try and carry out their intention as coolly as if they had only half their own number to contest with. The freebooters consisted of Normans and foreign mercenaries, whom Edward had found it necessary to engage in his wars with Scotland; many of them were disbanded, others deserted from the army, and joining together in bands, they infested the forests with which England at this period abounded, committing robberies, murders, and enormities too atrocious for recital: occasionally, the villagers, who were the greatest sufferers by their villanies, rose up *en masse* and retaliated by nearly exterminating them; but the constant war in which England was plunged brought fresh hordes to supply the place of those destroyed, and thus, notwithstanding the efforts of the people, the evil could not be rooted out or kept under. The band now attacked by the smiths and miners fought with considerable impetuosity, the more especially as they were aware they had the superiority of numbers, and had not to learn they were opposed to men who would either conquer or perish, a determination they had twice or thrice experienced in rather a fearful manner; they knew, therefore, that they must, to gain the victory, slaughter their hardy opponents where they stood; they tried hard to accomplish it, but their efforts were not crowned with the success they hoped for. In their previous fight with the miners, they had always found them make a stand, and keep it, and had always been compelled to compromise, because after fighting until they were exhausted, they had been unable to make them retrograde one inch. Now, led on by Ethelbert—cheered by his voice, excited by his enthusiasm, they, instead of remaining in the place they had chosen for the attack as hitherto, advanced with a spirit and vigour which would not be denied, and as they had no idea about going back until they had gained their purpose, the freebooters discovered themselves being driven from place to place with no mean loss of comrades. Their leader fought gallantly, it is true, but his individual bravery had not the effect of stimulating his men to follow his example, and his bravery was contingent upon the support they gave him, for so long as he conceived they were seconding his efforts, he fought steadily and vigorously, but when every now and then he found himself the foremost of all his people, and dropped back to let them share the honor of sustaining the brunt of the battle, only to find himself again almost alone—his courage began to ooze away, and his imagination to foretel a fate which he was most anxious to avoid. In the midst of one of these unpleasant reflections he was attacked by Ethelbert Evesham, who all along had fought with an ungovernable fury, as if he was actuated by a species of frenzy or madness—an insatiable desire for blood, which not even the slaughter of man after man, whom with a singular facility he cut down, could glut. He flourished his unsparing sword, and uttering a cry of mingled fierceness and bitter rancour, he assaulted the leader of the band with such impetuosity that he was compelled to retreat rapidly before him. Ethelbert followed up his attack so closely, the leader was unable to recover, and not being possessed of unflinching courage, which was necessary to induce him to stand firm, he grew alarmed, turned his back, and fled. Ethelbert flew after him like a tiger after his prey, and ere he had flown many steps, he cut him to the earth, and then pierced him through the body several times, slaying him completely. As he was withdrawing his sword the last time, one of the robbers, who had seen him kill his leader, uttered a tremendous oath, and thrust him through the back with a pike; but before he could draw it out again, he was himself cut down by Benulph, who, having witnessed Ethelbert's success against the chief of the marauders, was hastening to his side, in order to follow up the advantage. Ethelbert uttered a dreadful groan, and would have fallen, but the young Miner caught him in his arms and supported him; the blood flowed copiously from his wound, and Benulph had scarcely held him a minute ere he was drenched in his blood. The pike-staff, when the robber was cut down, had broken short off, leaving the steel head in Ethelbert's body; and Benulph knew that if he drew the head out he would die directly after; he therefore let it remain, and called one of his friends to his aid. They bandaged up the wound as well as they could, and in some degree stanched the blood, and then the young Miner, leaving him to the care of his friend, returned to the contest, from which he knew he could not be spared. Ethelbert's fate made him fight with the desperation of a madman, and his friends caught fresh enthusiasm from his energetic conduct. The loss of their leader proved the downfall of the freebooters; without an acknowledged head to lead or direct them, they grew confused and disordered; there were none of them who could place confidence in themselves, they needed aid from others, and when they could not get it they had not the courage to try and do without it—they gave ground everywhere—they grew panic-stricken; some fled, others threw down their arms—not a few were cut down, and the little gallant band of miners and smiths became the victors without the loss of a man, save Ethelbert, whose wound was mortal, and only a few were badly wounded. Those of the freebooters who fled were pursued and brought back; they were placed with those who had thrown down their arms, and then they were led to the haunt, which was not far distant, and which, under the fear of instant death, they discovered to the miners. They were put into it, and after a strict search having been made to see if there was more than one outlet, one half of the victors was left to guard them, until it was decided by Hartulf and the elders of the village what should be done with them. When this arrangement was completed, litters were made for the wounded, and Benulph, with half his men, returned to relate his success to his father. A strong litter of boughs, covered with leaves, was made for Ethelbert, and he was placed with the utmost care upon it. He lay almost insensible, suffering, it might be judged by the drops of cold perspiration that stood thickly upon his brow, the greatest agony; but he neither groaned nor by distorted features indicated the pain he really endured. He lay with his eyes half closed, and his blue lips a little apart, breathing heavily, but he made

no motion to shew that he felt grieved or impatient at the fate that had overtaken him; once only, when Benulph addressed a few words of kind consolation, which, if uttered a little roughly, were well-meant and sincere, he opened his eyes feebly and smiled, gently pointing with his hand to the village to which they were bearing him, and said in a low voice, so faint as scarcely to be audible—

"Haste thee, haste thee, or 'twill be too late."

And then, when Benulph gave orders to increase their pace, the smile faded from his face, his eyes closed, and with his blanched cheeks he looked as if he was really gone to the bourne to which he was rapidly hastening. Benulph placed his hand upon his heart, with almost a certainty that it had ceased to beat, but felt that it still feebly vibrated, and he urged on those who bore the litter, for he feared that when they reached the village, unless great speed was used, he would be no longer alive. The night was calm and still, and save an owl or two which they disturbed uttering its solitary "Tu-whit, tu-whoo," they encountered nothing as they returned to the village; but when they neared it, one of the miners blew a blast of his horn, and soon there were many anxious faces peering from open doors to welcome the comers, and to see who had to bewail the loss or injury of one near and dear to them. Maidens and matrons, and old men were soon from their beds—at least, those whose philosophy would permit them to seek their couch when they knew their dearest relatives were engaged in strife—and poured forth to hear what success had attended their bold enterprize; and though they had never anticipated defeat, they had expected there would have been more sufferers than were brought to experience their tenderest care and attention, and they were agreably surprised by finding so few, although it was tinctured with a deep regret that the only one whose life was involved in the conflict should be a stranger, who had so nobly combated in their behalf, in order, as they supposed, to repay the obligation he had received in the shape of shelter and hospitality from a member of their community. There was not one who did not sincerely wish that one of their own people had fallen rather than Ethelbert, and could the forfeit of a life have saved him, these simple but honest people would have gladly yielded it up, nor sighed at the exchange, the more particularly when they came to hear how gallantly he had battled, and had, to a certain extent, been the cause of their so speedily defeating a number so much larger than their own. While yet on his way to the dwelling of Hartulf, borne gently, yet swiftly, there were numerous proffers of assistance from those who were skilled in the management of hurts; but when the nature of his wound was known, the most experienced man of the number shook his head, and turned away with a sigh. The intelligence of their victory, but for this alloy, would have have been received with cheers and with merry-making, even had the dying man been one of their own fraternity; but this primitive people were governed by certain laws and principles, and observed them with the most scrupulous exactness. The laws of hospitality were as strong, if not stronger, than any they acknowledged, and the death of a stranger, who was a partaker of their hospitality, meeting with his death-blow whilst aiding them against the villanous designs of lawless ruffians, was matter quite sufficient to make them believe a respect for his mournful situation of more consequence than a joyous demonstration of pleasure at their success; they therefore were silent, and followed the litter which bore Ethelbert with uncovered heads, noiselessly, "Ill news flies apace," it is said; and it was soon spread through the village that the stranger who had, in conjunction with Benulph, led on the miners against his foes, was slain, before Hartulf's dwelling could be gained by those who bore Ethelbert.

Hartulf was standing at the threshold, waiting with a mournful aspect to receive him. Halbert sat, with his face buried in his hands, consumed by grief; but Violet and Flora, unconscious that Ethelbert had even joined the miners, lay buried in profound repose, revelling in sweet dreams, the visionary realisation of hopes they fondly entertained when awake, and so they were not there to meet him with tearful eyes and sad looks. He was borne into a quiet room, and laid with extreme care upon a soft bed; he rested on his side, for the presence of the weapon made it impossible for him to lie upon his back. He appeared calm, and conscious of everything. He spoke a few words of consolation to his brother Halbert, and then he said there were a few things he wished to say ere he breathed his last: but requested to have one to pray to him for a short time before he commenced disclosing them, that he might say what he had to communicate in a more placid and resigned manner. Hartulf, to whom the request was made, whispered to Alwena, who was in the room, and she hastily quitted it. In a minute afterwards she returned, accompanied by a female, who followed her to the bedside. The instant the female placed her eyes upon Ethelbert, she uttered a piercing shriek. He opened his eyes like lightning, and with extraordinary exertion he raised himself upon his hands, and exclaimed, in a voice singularly loud and clear—

"Holy Mother of God! EDITHA!"

CHAPTER III.

"During the siege of Cambray there were many skirmishes and combats * * * * * * * * John Chandos, as yet but an esquire (of whose prowess this book will speak much), flung himself between the barrier and the gate, at the length of a lance, and fought very gallantly with an esquire of Vermandois, called John de Saint Dizier. Each of them performed deeds of great valor."

FROISSART'S CHRONICLES.

"He that trusts you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares:
Where foxes, geese. You are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
Or hailstones in the sun."

SHAKESPERE.

"East, west, alas! I care not whither,
So thou art safe, and I with thee!
Go where we will, this hand in thine.
Those eyes before me smiling thus,
Through good and ill, through storm and shine"

MOORE.

"When the enemy were mounted and armed, they galloped after them like madmen. Sir Walter Mauny seeing this, exclaimed, 'May I never be embraced by my mistress and dear friend if I enter castle or fortress before I have unhorsed one of these gallopers.' He then turned round, and pointed his spear towards the enemy."

FROISSART.

THE siege of Cambray was a matter upon which Edward the Third did not set his heart. He considered it but a stepping stone to his incursion into France—an act by which the friendly intentions of the foreign nobles accompanying him in the expedition would be compromised, and they compelled to proceed with him in his future designs. He was well aware, that backed only

by his own troops, dauntless as they were, he should be unable to conquer France, and therefore it was necessary he should have the aid of the Germans and Flemings; but he found them such vacillating people, that he was almost heartily sick of his attempted conquest before he commenced it. Cambray was well supplied with troops and provisions, was strong, and ably defended by walls of immense thickness; still it presented to Edward nothing but what, with such a fine army as he possessed, he should find comparatively easy to conquer, and he prepared himself to carry it by a brilliant assault: and in the council summoned to decide the mode of attack, he expressed his intention; but, to his chagrin, he met with few supporters, save in his own immediate followers.

It was in vain that Sir Walter Manny, in language eloquent and energetic, seconded Edward's proposition, using arguments which the King's rage and mortification deprived him of the power of uttering. They determined to do their "spiriting gently," and it was not in Edward's ability to make them do otherwise. They divided themselves into parties, and made excursions into the country around, burning and destroying all that came in their way. Sir John Hainault and the Lord of Fauquemont made themselves most conspicuous in this way. With five hundred lances and a thousand men-at-arms they attacked the Castle of Oisy, in Cambresis; but wanting the brilliant qualities of Sir Walter Manny, who, with only forty followers, succeeded in carrying a castle nearly as strong, they fought and assaulted with vigour and fury, but not sufficiently to make them victors; and they were repelled with so much valour, that they were glad to make the best of their way back to Cambray, leaving the French flag still waving upon the walls of the castle of Oisy. Edward, finding that he stood a fair chance of passing the remainder of his life before the city if he waited until he had the free aid of his allies to carry it by assault, determined to try what was to be done single-handed, and making known his intention to Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Derby, they readily agreed to do all they could to promote the enterprise. And when the young Earl of Hainault came to know their intention, he volunteered with his Hainaulters to join them, provided a gallant Englishman was picked out to aid him in leading his men to the assault. The Earl of Derby, to whom he made known his wishes, chose John Chandos; and upon a Saturday morning, everything being prepared, the Earl of Hainault, with a large body of troops, and Edward, with Sir Walter Manny, the Earl of Derby, and several other nobles, with a numerous body of men, prepared to try what was to be done towards capturing the city; but by far the greater part of the allies remained quiet. The Earl, with his troop, made for a gate called St. Quentin, and Edward, with his followers, to one called St. Robert. The gate of St. Quentin was within the barriers, and was much the easiest one of the two to attempt—Edward reserving for himself the gate of St. Robert, because there was most glory to be obtained there. The Earl of Hainault and John Chandos moved quickly to their point of attack, and were soon in action.

The defence of the barrier had been given to a gallant French esquire, named John de Saint Dizier; he was a stalwart powerful young man—had earned for himself a good name for his great prowess, which was no less the offspring of his amazing personal strength and size, than of his courage, of which he had no lack. He was seconded by a troop of gallant men, and the Hainaulters soon found they were not engaged in child's play, and would have given ground, had it not been for the exertions of John Chandos, who, as Wat had said, "finding perils as thick as hail," did his utmost to gain honour and renown. "Despite his vanished ambition, his destruction of hopes, his void heart," he cheered the men on with the high clear tones of his musical voice, and whenever they appeared wavering, he restored their confidence by his words and deeds; but the French esquire, John de Saint Dizier, did the same with his men, and with the same success. Alone, he made terrible havoc among the Hainaulters, and at length the men grew afraid to oppose him—gave way before him: he followed them up, cheering on his men, pressed them, they retreated, and John Chandos, finding how matters were going, as well as seeing who was the occasion of his party's giving ground, made towards him and soon confronted him—the Hainaulters, nothing loth to give way and let him have the fight with St. Dizier all to himself; each knew the value of conquering the other—each possessed great strength, considerable skill and activity, and the highest courage. Both were of enthusiastic natures, and each had already earned laurels in their respective armies: the fight between them, therefore, was desperate, but notwithstanding all St. Dizier's efforts, his courage, his strength, or his skill, John Chandos proved victor. The Frenchman fought to the last, and refusing to take quarter, was slain; his followers seeing his fate, gave ground, and the barrier was carried.

In the meanwhile Edward and his gallant troop poured on to attack the barriers defending Robert's gate; and as the post was an important one, it had been lined with the best troops in the garrison, under the command of the most noble and gallant men there. The barriers themselves were so admirably placed, that a handful of stout hearts might have almost held them against an army, but they were thronged with lances, men-at-arms, and archers, who, as the English approached, discharged showers of arrows, and uttered wild cries to dismay them, but they were not at all alarmed, and advanced to the charge as coolly as if they were going to their dinners. They gained the barriers, forced their way, and under a tremendous stormed of arrows, they attacked the French most desperately.

Edward showed himself a right gallant soldier—he fought nobly, and was aided nobly. Wat Tyler, as before, fought by the side of Sir Walter Manny, and Michael a few paces from him: Leowulf was there with his little sturdy band, and performed prodigies of valour. Once Edward was struck on his knees—it was Wat Tyler's good fortune to be near him; he placed himself before the King, and fought like a lion; but as Edward's helm and gorgeously emblazoned surcoat proved him to be of distinguished rank, great efforts were made to capture him, but Wat stood over him like a rock; he was soon joined by Michael, and by this time Edward recovered his feet, and with his battle axe did terrible execution.

Still, as it passed from one to another that an English noble was nearly in their power—that they had *only* got to take him, numbers joined in the attempt, and soon Edward, Wat, and Michael were surrounded. In spite of their terrific exertions, capture seemed inevitable, when Wat heard Leowulf shouting near him, and at the top of his voice called to him to bring his hammers, for there were those who needed his best aid. Leowulf heard him, replied with a loud hurrah, and soon cut a lane, followed by his Kentish men, who would have fought their way through fire if he led them; they soon changed the situation of Edward, and the French were glad to retreat

before the fierce assault of this reinforcement; they were, however, in their turn reinforced by great numbers, and returned to the attack with fresh vigour.

The English fought with desperate valour; cheered on by their King, by Sir Walter Manny, the Earl of Derby—they would have been cut to pieces to a man ere they would have retired; but their bravery availed them not against treble their numbers, as well as stout barriers; and when Edward perceived, after sustaining the combat against enormous odds for nearly three hours, that he had gained little and lost many men, he gave orders to retire, not seeing the utility of losing his best men on such a field. The discipline shewn by his followers was sufficient to induce them to obey him, and they retreated slowly, but with no very good grace. Such of the French as pursued them had good cause to repent their eagerness, for every inch of the ground they yielded cost a Frenchman his life; they contested every particle of it, and when they were beyond the barriers, they still kept a front to the foe, and though exposed to a heavy fire of arrows, their pace was slow and measured; nor did they, until out of the reach of the missiles, turn their backs and march to their quarters. After this affair various assaults were made, but principally by the English, the allies shewing a supineness which made Edward storm and rage, so that there was scarce any approaching him.

At last he heard that Philip of Valois, King of France, was assembling a large army at Peronne, in Vermandois, and he determined no longer to waste time before this city, but attack the King of France, and either acquire glory by defeating him, or finish the campaign by being himself beaten. Accordingly he called a council, and put the question. The whole of the English lords were for it; they were heartily sick of stopping before Cambray, where little or nothing was done, great expense incurred, and little prospect of either profit or glory accruing to them while they remained there, and they strenuously supported Edward. Many of the German lords were against it, especially the Earls of Hainault and Namur, who expressed their determination not to enter France in a hostile manner. However, Edward had resolved to go, and it was not in the power of a few dissentients to stop him; he gave orders to strike the tents, and march to Mont St. Martin, which was done.

After some adventures at Mont St. Martin, they entered the Vermandois, and went, by the advice of the Duke of Brabant, towards Tierache; still keeping near Hainault, he proceeded to Sarnaques, until he reached Montreuil. He stayed there one day, and on the next gained La Flamengrie; here he stopped with the purpose of waiting for King Philip, who he learned was at Vironfosse with a splendid army, among whom were the kings of Bohemia, Navarre, and of Scotland, besides a very large number of dukes, earls, barons, and knights, the flower of France. A council was called, and the King of England proposed giving immediate battle. The Duke of Brabant, to whom all the German and Fleming lords looked as their leader, was also for fighting; and as, in those days of chivalry, they did everything in the most courteous manner, a herald was sent to Philip to offer him battle, and requesting him to fix a day, which he did, naming the following Friday, dismissing the herald with rich presents.

The Friday morning came, and the English army prepared for battle; they heard mass, and then got under arms. They were drawn out in order of battle upon an extensive plain. They were divided into three battalions of infantry: the first battalion, consisting of eight thousand men, was placed under the command of the Duke of Gueldres; the second battalion, consisting of seven thousand men, was under the command of the Duke of Brabant, and the barons and lords of his domain; the third and largest, composed of six thousand men-at-arms, and six thousand archers, was led by the king himself—all the nobles of England being ranged under his banner. When they were all in array, he rode along the line of the army, attended only by Sir Robert d'Artois, Sir Reginald Cobham, and Sir Walter Manny; "and right sweetly entreated the lords and their companions that they would aid him to preserve his honour, which they all promised."*

The King of France having he 'vantage ground, as well as the superiority of numbers—his army being composed of three battalions, each consisting of fifteen thousand men-at-arms, and twenty thousand men on foot—Edward posted his army as well as the nature of the ground would permit, and waited the attack; but the French were divided among themselves, and were disinclined to commence the battle, alleging every reason for their hesitation but the real one, that of wanting gallant daring sufficient. Philip of Valois was in a tremendous rage with those who held back, and in vain endeavoured to induce them to commence the assault which the English and Germans were waiting so patiently to receive; they wasted the morning in disputes, and in the middle of them letters arrived from Robert, King of Sicily, who professed to be, and was considered a great astrologer; the purport of his advices were, that if Philip of Valois hazarded a battle with the English, when Edward commanded in person, he would surely be defeated. The no-fighting party immediately strenuously advised him not to give battle, and indeed refused their aid.

As the evening drew on, it grew pretty generally understood the French would not begin the battle; and as it would have been utter madness on the part of Edward to quit his position to commence the attack, there seemed no prospect of a conflict between them ensuing. Edward, at all times hot and impetuous, was worn out with impatience; he exhausted every epithet of contumely upon the King of France and his followers; he "vowed to God" it had never been his ill-fortune to be before this confronted with such a huge mass of frightened hounds, and, in despite of all policy or prudence, would have cried to his gallant hearts, as Wellington did at Waterloo at the last decisive moment, "Up lads, and at them!" but was prevented by his cooler allies, the Duke of Brabant, the Duke of Gueldres, and Sir John de Hainault; in fact, when the latter found there was no chance of a struggle, he withdrew his men, and marched away to Quesnoy.† His example was followed by the Dukes of Brabant, and Gueldres, and Edward was thus compelled to retire as well, which he did that same night to Avesnes, in Hainault, in a frame of mind that made it dangerous for any one who had offended him to approach him. The next day the Brabanters and the Germans coolly took their leave of him, and returned to their homes; and he, scarce knowing what to do with himself, went to the castle of the Duke of Brabant with his troops, much inclined to do battle with his own allies rather than not fight at all. However, the Duke managed to soothe him, and persuaded him to go to Brussels, call a council, and get the whole of Flanders to declare in his favour; he with some difficulty was brought to accede; and when he met the Flemings, they consented to give him all their aid, if he would quarter the arms of France with his own, because, being pledged by oath under a penalty of two millions of florins not to act

* Froissart.

offensively against the King of France, they could not render him aid and assistance unless he declared himself King of France; in the event of his doing so, they could thus evade their oath, and throw off a yoke that was hateful to them. Edward did not like to comply, and yet their aid was of too much importance to lightly refuse: he had conquered no part of France as yet, and if the war was carried on as it had been commenced, there was little likelihood that he ever should; it was, therefore, in his opinion, rather an impudent assumption to wear a title he had done so little to obtain; he was, however, over-ruled, and he agreed to the terms, quartering the arms of France with those of England. When every arrangement was made to carry on the war, he returned to London to make fresh levies and imposts for the support of his army; he was attended by a long list of nobles, among whom was Sir Walter Manny. But he, perhaps, of all the army who most desired to return to London, was prevented by an unlooked for occurrence; Wat Tyler, when he knew it was Edward's intention to return to England, hugged himself in the anticipation that he should do so likewise, particularly as Sir Walter Manny was to accompany the King, and he and Michael indulged in many conversations respecting it, speculating with vivid and fertile imaginations upon the changes which were likely to have taken place during their absence—for they had now been away nearly three years—and picturing fondly the delight with which they would be welcomed, and the happy hours they should spend in recounting all they had seen and undergone during their absence; but their bitter disappointment may be imagined when they found they had to remain in Flanders by the express commands of the King. In the skirmish at the barriers before Cambray, Edward had taken particular notice of Wat Tyler for his gallantry, and would have knighted him, but that his age rendered him ineligible unless he had been of a noble family. He expressed himself to that effect to Wat, and presented him with a sword, richly emblazoned, a gift of which Wat was justly very proud. Sir Walter Manny had not failed, too, having the opportunity, of speaking highly in his praise to Edward, and obtained the promise that, as soon as his age permitted, he should kneel before his Majesty to rise up a knight. John Chandos received his spurs previous to the meeting of the armies at Vironfosse; his brilliant achievements at the barrier of St. Quentin, at Cambray, caused the Earl of Hainault to make very particular mention of him to Edward, and as he had just attained the age of twenty-one Edward knighted him: he was now, therefore, Sir John Chandos.

When Edward quitted Flanders, he left the Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk in command of all the troops he left behind him, and they made the request to him to leave with them a few of the best knights and squires he could spare, who had a name for chivalric daring with the soldiers, in order that in case of skirmish or battle the men might have a few acknowledged brilliant leaders to follow, whose animation and enthusiasm would sustain them if they had to encounter a number greater than their own. Among those chosen were Sir John Chandos and Wat Tyler. They were each elected to a high post of honour; and much as Wat wished to have visited London, he dared not make a demur even to Sir Walter Manny, for the position in which he was placed was looked upon as a strong evidence of the estimation in which Edward held him—one with which he ought to be proud, and gratified; he therefore swallowed his regret as he best could, and essayed to appear cheerful, though with a heart that ached with hope deferred. Michael, who would have looked upon the visit of a thunderbolt with far greater resignation, was not able to master his chagrin as Wat did; but although he had the opportunity of returning—for a word from Wat would have managed it—he would not go; where Wat stayed, he stayed—where he went, thither would he go, true to the last through all things. Severely as he felt his disappointment, when he perceived that his allusions, his regrets, and his sadness made Wat wince, and show that he too strongly partook of the same feeling, he stifled them to the best of his ability before him, and when he did indulge in the "luxury of grief," it was when he was alone.

Sir Walter Manny took his farewell of Wat kindly and nobly. He spoke of Violet, and but slightly alluded to the circumstance which prevented Wat returning to her as an occurrence which, if it contained an alloy, was of itself of so flattering a nature, that his proud joy at being selected for so honourable a post ought to sink every other feeling. He told Wat that, if it was his wish, he would visit Brenchley, set Violet at ease respecting him, and bring him a faithful relation of all he could desire to know with which she was connected; at the same time he said, and said it too so delicately, that if he felt the slightest reluctance to his visiting her, and he not by, he would refrain from his present intention, and make her acquainted with his situation and bright prospects through a messenger.

Wat felt strongly the noble manner in which Sir Walter conveyed this respect to his feelings, and wanted words to show how it was impressed upon his heart. He was too sure of Sir Walter's high principles of honour to feel a doubt about him; and was too confident of Violet's purity to fear that having acknowledged to him her whole heart was entirely and completely his, she would be affected by the presence of Sir Walter Manny—noble as he was in mind and person, and gentle in manner, though he visited her a thousand times while he was far away; he believed, and rightly too, that though seas divided them, he still was ever present to her imagination, and let who might be in her company, he was not forgotten for one moment. He, therefore, gladly accepted of the noble knight's offer to visit her, and though he could not trust himself to say many words, yet what he did say was as well understood, and as much to the purpose, as if his speech had been equal to the contents of a volume. Faithfully Sir Walter promised to deliver them, and faithfully he would too, if fortune placed the opportunity in his power.

Michael learned from Wat that Sir Walter was to bear a mission from him to Violet, and his first impression was, that Wat was extraordinarily confiding to place both in the way of temptation, without having a fear of the consequences. But a few words from Wat put him right on that subject; and, in the fulness of his heart, he begged of the knight to also bear a mission from him, which Sir Walter consented readily to deliver with the kindness and urbanity of a noble-minded man—one who, secure of his position, knew how to be frank and free with those who were "nature's gentlemen," had they been slaves, and he a king.

"Tell her," said Michael, earnestly, too much absorbed in his thoughts of her to examine nicely the character of his speech. "Tell her that I am well and happy—that is, as happy as I can be away from her; tell her if I haven't done wonders in the army, that I have not disgraced myself, nor her memory."

"That, indeed, my worthy Michael, you have not,"

said Sir Walter, warmly, "I can well substantiate that."

"Thank you," replied Michael; "I know you'll speak truth of me, and that's all I care about. Tell her I have often thought of her—that is, when I say often, I mean every night and morning, before meals and after, whenever I see a pretty female face, or have a chance of having a rap at an ugly one, whenever I am abroad or within the tent, beneath oaken roof or blue sky, whether stretched upon the bare earth or lying upon a pleasant couch, whether standing inactive with my comrades in the troop, or whether rattling away with my sword in hard fight, whether talking or silent, walking or sitting, sleeping or waking, ever is she in my heart and mind; that's what I mean by often."

"Not a bad definition," smiled Sir Walter.

"Perhaps you'd better say always," said Michael, thoughtfully, almost soliloquising, "that's the better and the truer word, and that's the truth of the matter, too, for she is always in my mind; oh, how often I can see her pretty eyes dancing about with delight, hear her merry laugh ring clear in my ear, and see her pretty figure as she trips here and there with her long curls flying about like the vine tendrils in a soft wind; and to think for a foolish fit of jealousy—no, hang it, not jealousy—but a capricious, choking sort of a burning, raging, fiery feeling in my breast, I should be ass enough to walk myself off. She was not mine, then—that is, not lawfully by the church mine, and she had still a right to do as she liked, and I know she meant no harm—nothing but high spirits and girlish thoughtlessness—only somehow I thought she shouldn't have done it, and now I would rather she had not—"

"Am I to tell her all this?" said Sir Walter, a smile lurking in the corners of his mouth, although he tried to appear serious.

"No—that is—let me see, what was I saying?" said Michael, arousing himself, with some confusion from his abstraction.

"That you would have rather stayed in Brenchley than come to Flanders," smilingly said Wat Tyler, who had accompanied Michael in his interview with Sir Walter.

"Did I?—well I don't know but what I really would," answered Michael; "however, you need not exactly say so, only lead her to believe so, and you can say all that you think I should wish to say, Sir Walter, if you please, for you have the gift of speaking pleasantly and well, and can express in such nice words all you mean so glibly, while I, who can mean as well as anybody, can't find words to explain; give her a thousand kisses—no, no, no, that is, I mean, tell her I send her a thousand kisses—in thought—"

"Oh!" cried Sir Walter, with a laugh, "then I am not to deliver them?"

"Only as a message," replied Michael, hardly knowing whether to laugh or look serious, almost doubting whether it would not have been the wiser plan not to have sent any message at all by Sir Walter; "you can say that I send them in imagination, and she is to receive them in imagination."

"There is nothing like reality," exclaimed Sir Walter, still smiling.

"Hum! suppose you say nothing about them at all," said Michael, a little quickly, "say only all that I ought to say; I place myself in your hands, and I am sure to be represented with honour and truth."

Sir Walter Manny shook hands with him, and bade him rest satisfied that he should not suffer in her estimation by his representations. After a little further conversation they separated, and the time for departure arriving, Sir Walter sailed with the King, leaving his squire, oppressed with a heavy heart, behind him.

During the whole of the time which had elapsed from the departure of the expedition to make the first incursion into France up to the present time, Rubacelle still continued with Wat, attending him with the most untiring, anxious solicitude; any little act that could make his position pleasanter, or his duties lighter, she anticipated and performed with an earnestness and affectionateness that found a ready way to his heart, and he strove, by kind words and gentleness of manner, to repay it. He looked upon her with the affection of a brother; her unremitting attention to him, her utter absence of all selfishness where his comfort or happiness was concerned, had won something more than esteem; he could not see her every thought upon him—her every desire, her constant anxiety to do him service, to render him free from all pain or care, without feeling grateful, without, to a certain extent, returning her affection.

The love of kindred is distinct and different from that we possess for an individual related to us by no ties but those of sympathy; the affection we bear for relatives is as much a duty as an inclination, is felt as such, and is borne quietly, dispassionately, and unprejudicedly. Linked together by bonds of blood, we feel, in a degree, that they are a part of ourselves, and, viewing them in that light, become attached to them, whether they possess qualities to excite our esteem, mentally or personally, or not.

Estimable qualifications in kindred is always a secondary consideration; not that it should be so, or that goodness and loveliness should not strengthen and add to the affection we naturally feel for brothers or sisters; but they are a part and parcel of ourselves, the same blood flows in the veins of each, and even in cases of moral turpitude, they are still our brother or sister, and we must still feel an affection for them. But love, the passion of one being for another not united by the ties of consanguinity, is a far different feeling, and stands alone. All things are relative and comparative; we know the value of things only by contrast, and the power of love itself, the passion raised independent of aught but some charm which may not be described, which the eyes of one alone can perhaps see, is known by its difference to any feeling of the same character and nature, because it absorbs and swallows up every other consideration. It is the topmost point, and makes everything else, each other thought and purpose, subservient to it; what the heart is to the frame, love, when once inspired, is to the heart—it is the life, the impulse, the spring of action, thought or wish.

Such it was to Rubacelle; she was isolated in the world; her whole soul centred upon one object—her desire to live dependent solely upon that object; it was to her all and everything, the only motive and tie which bound her to the world. In fact, it was her world, and should it perish, its destruction would involve her's also.

Wat Tyler, however, already devoted to the same extent to Violet, could only return her affection in a comparative degree. He knew she had given up all for him, although he had not wished it; still she had given up all, and the feeling which makes us regard with affection and kindness those who are affectionate and kind to us, was raised in his breast for her. He had no sister, and her attention and never-failing anxiety to supply every want, her devotion, made him esteem her—nay, love her as a sister—to look upon her in the light of one, to be as pure in his thoughts of her as if she was one, and as tender and solicitous for her happiness. His gentleness to her, his consi-

deration for her—his ever ready smile and tenderness of speech, always uttered in the kindest tones, made her love for him every hour "deeper and deeper still;" and often did she think 'twould be easier far to die than to be parted from him—her heart's beloved.

John Chandos had kept his promise of endeavouring to persuade her, thinking her in reality to be what Wat had led him to believe, to quit Wat and be page to him; had offered her noble terms—had vowed that no brother could be treated with more affection by a brother than she should be; but she refused, gently, but firmly, with many thanks, but unchanging determination; and John Chandos, with a pang of disappointment, was compelled to give up his hope of persuading her. He scarcely ever afterwards mentioned her name to Wat, scarce ever looked towards her when he met her in Wat's company; and our hero could see from his conduct in the field, that when he fought, it was as much for death as glory. It was an ungracious task for Wat to plead his cause, because every word he said in his favour was as though he was desirous of parting with her—that he wished her away, and regarded her with indifference: but he felt for John Chandos so strongly that he could not refrain from alluding to him, and by praising him highly, advocate his cause; representing how happy he would make the maiden he loved if she would wed him, and how deeply he had taken her refusal to heart.

Rubacelle heard him patiently, and when he ceased, she said, sorrowfully—

"I know well, and very, very often think of it, that my being with you is a tax upon your kindness and your patience."

"Indeed, Rubacelle," cried Wat, hastily, "you are quite wrong; pray entertain no such thought—I would not, for Edward's crown, you laboured under such a mistake."

"I think so, because I am sure it must be so," she returned. "I do not believe your kind heart would make you harbour such an idea; but that will not alter the fact of its being so. I can see that I am, and would willingly withdraw myself from your presence if I could; but, indeed, I have not the power, of my own free-will, and I am sure you would never utter a word or do an act which would make me think you really desired me to do so. For John Chandos I feel all the sympathy which his situation demands, for well I appreciate it—" Here her voice trembled a little; "but I have to bear the same feelings without the same opportunity of stirring scenes to rob me of a vivid recollection of hopes destroyed, yet, by your kind-heartedness, I sorrow not for what cannot be. But, Wat, if your happiness would be increased by seeing me his wife, and he would take my hand without a heart, I will yield to your wishes and wed him; but if you would not be very much happier and could bear with me a little longer, I—I—"

She could say no more, but burst into tears. Wat took her hand, and pressing it fervently, said, very earnestly—

"Dear Rubacelle, my happiness could only be increased by seeing you happy. I should be happy to see you John Chandos' wife if you could be happier in being so; and proposed it because I feel sure that if the constant care and loving actions of a man to his beloved could render her happy, John Chandos would make your life one round of bliss; but as I now perceive in consenting to my proposition you would be sacrificing your own peace of mind under the idea you were adding to my felicity, I would not have you do it for any earthly consideration. No, Rubacelle, your happiness has become as important to me as my own. I cannot be blind or indifferent to the affection you display for me—I am fully sensible of it, and would that I could return it as it is bestowed; for the love of one so gentle and fair as thou is worth possessing by the noblest man that ever breathed. But it cannot be! Violet to me is all the world. I love her with an affection which can neither know change nor cessation but with the termination of my life. She is so pure, so gentle, so beautiful, that even you, Rubacelle—though she steps between you and your hopes—would love her, did you know her, very dearly."

"If you think her worthy of your love," said Rubacelle in a low voice, "I am sure I should love her most dearly."

"Worthy of my love!" echoed Wat; "could a man be made an emperor of the world because he was all-excelling in every noble quality and personal attractions and accomplishments, he might be highly proud of winning her love. What, then, must I?" She has my undivided heart, Rubacelle—had it years ere I saw you; and were thy beauty or thy sweetness of temper tenfold what they are—which would be impossible—I could never change from her in one slight shade. But I can love you, and do love you as a sister, and will be to you in all things a brother; think of me as such, act to me as such, and while I have life thou shalt have my counsel, my protection, and every kindness a brother's love can dictate; and as you would be certain, were you my sister, that I should esteem your being with me no tax on either my patience or my kindness, banish all fancies of that nature, and let us share our fate together, through good and evil, as a loving brother and sister."

"You were ever, from the first moment of my knowing you, Wat, until now, the kindest being on earth," exclaimed Rubacelle, in a voice of emotion, when he ceased; "I will be to thee as a sister, and we will never part, but go through the world together, and Violet, the gentle and good, the beloved of my heart—happy, happy maid—will not be averse to our companionship, for we shall, for aye, be brother and sister, and I will be a sister and friend to her, too, and we may all be very happy yet, may we not?"

"I am glad to hear thee speak so cheerfully," replied Wat; "I trust that the day will not be far distant when we shall all meet and be as happy as we can wish; you will find a sister and friend in Violet, as true and sincere as you will find a brother and friend in me."

But fate will be perverse, and the best wishes and fondest hopes of those who are really good and pure, are more often frustrated, utterly, than realised.

The Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk, upon the departure of Edward for London, went to the town of Ypres, where they took up their quarters, there garrisoned the town, and made excursions from it to the various towns belonging to the French in its vicinity. Lisle and its environs suffered much, and much booty was gained. A twelvemonth nearly expired ere Edward returned to Flanders: he left the Thames in 1340, and sailed for Sluys, where the French had an enormous fleet, consisting of "upwards of one hundred and twenty large vessels, without counting others." They had forty thousand men on board, principally Genoese and Picards, and they were anchored here to dispute the passage with Edward. The French, while Edward was in Flanders, had attacked Southampton, and done deeds of great villany, and among other captures they had made was that of a splendid large vessel which Edward had caused to be built and named the Christopher: this

ship was now in the hands of those drawn up to oppose him, and was manned with a vast number of men, and had on board a band of trumpeters and other players of warlike instruments, and was ordered to commence the attack. Edward was delighted that at last he should have a chance of fighting; he had been so disappointed and deterred by one thing and another, that he almost felt loth to return to Flanders, expecting that he should a second time lose treasure and time without gaining a single advantage; but now, with his own people commanded by his own nobles, he knew, that although greatly inferior in numbers, he should be right gallantly seconded, and if it were possible to be done, prove the winner. "The battle," says Froissart, "was a very murderous and horrible one." Sir Walter Manny, in this fight, as in all others, proved himself the noblest of the noble; with the aid of his stout followers, he carried the Christopher by boarding, captured her, and making her people prisoners, turned her upon the French. The English fought, as they always do upon the sea, in a manner that was resistless, and in a comparatively short time, took all the ships opposed to them, gaining a complete victory.

Shortly after this, Edward marched upon Tournay to besiege it, and Wat Tyler, with John Chandos and Michael, returned with the Earl of Suffolk to Edward's army, and here met with Sir Walter Manny, who was with Edward. Wat anxiously and eagerly questioned him respecting his visit to Brenchley, but learned with considerable mortification, that he could gain no tidings of Violet. He had been to Brenchley during his sojourn in England many times; had seen Wat's mother and father, but they had heard nothing whatever of either Ethelbert, Halbert, Violet, or Flora, and nearly four years had elapsed since they had quitted to go to Gloucestershire; Sir Walter had even despatched messengers into Gloucestershire to try and trace them, but in vain. He passed a fortnight at Tonbridge Castle, was at the wedding of Ulfred and the Lady Agnes, and during his stay there had frequently gone over to the little village, but always to be disappointed; the only address they had left was to a convent, five miles south of Wickwar; thither had Sir Walter despatched one of his people, but gained no intelligence whatever. His own disappointment was scarce less than Wat's, and it took the latter no little trouble to persuade Michael, when he heard the news, to believe that they had not been carried off, the two brothers murdered, and both Violet and Flora in the power of a brace of villains, who would keep them secreted, and they would never be heard of any more. Their long absence was certainly mysterious even to Wat, who was yet loth to think any evil had befallen them. He could not conceive why they had not, at least, made his father and mother acquainted with their residence, and for a time began to fancy that Violet had found her parents—that they had turned out to be people of high birth, and kept her dwelling-place secret until they had given her to another—that the reason so long a time had passed away without intelligence of them was, that she had not forgotten him, and they found it difficult to persuade her to wed any one else. But then he remembered the conversation he had overheard between her and Halbert just before his departure, and dismissed the idea altogether, attributing it to some neglect on the part of a messenger, or any cause but an evil one. It was a difficult matter to school himself to this belief, but he did, and it was looking at a doubt on the right side; he had soon plenty of duty to assist him in keeping him from dwelling on the subject, for the siege of Tournay, which was a series of sharp skirmishes, kept him constantly in action for nearly eleven weeks, but it ended with the same result as that of Cambray. The Flemings and Brabanters were, as usual, wanting in courage and spirit, and readily agreed to a truce, in spite of Edward's opposition, and immediately it was proclaimed, broke up their tents and departed, bag and baggage.

It was of no use for Edward to complain, and though he raged and stormed when he found himself thus deserted, and was not over courteous in expressing his opinion of those nobles who had made such haste to get home, he could prevail upon none of them to remain and make a bolder essay for the city, which, had the Brabanters and Flemings only acted in concert with him, he could have taken easily. "Sore against his will," he departed, and returned to England, vowing the next incursion he made into France, whatever he attempted should be independent of any foreign aid; and in spite of all weakness and vacillation on the part of those who joined with him against France, whatever project he entertained, he would put it into execution whether they agreed to it or not. He left Sir Walter Manny behind him, with a large body of troops, with orders to take advantage of any matter that would tend to further his intentions upon France. Soon after his arrival in England, a dispute occurred respecting the right of succession to the dukedom of Brittany, and made work for Sir Walter Manny and our hero of a most brilliant character, an affair in which both achieved the most daring exploits and chivalric feats.

The Duke of Brittany, who had accompanied Philip of France to raise the siege of Tournay, upon his return suddenly died. He had two brothers, Guy and John de Montford; Guy died before the Duke, but left a daughter named Jane, who was called La Boiteuse (the lame). She was married to Charles of Blois, nephew to the King of France; and he, in behalf of her right, being the only daughter of the elder of the two brothers, laid claim to the dukedom; but John de Montfort, the surviving brother, maintained that the Salic law, which excludes females from succession, made the dukedom his, he being the nearest male relative to the deceased duke. Appeal was made to Philip of France, and it was soon easy to perceive he intended to decide in favour of his nephew.

De Montfort, who had been over to England to enlist Edward in his favour, went boldly to Paris to plead his cause; but having pretty good assurance given him, that if he remained there he would be made a prisoner—perhaps beheaded—he made his escape in disguise, and coming over to England, paid homage to Edward for his duchy. He received the strongest assurances of assistance. Knowing himself to be highly popular in Brittany, he did not wait to take whatever troops Edward intended to help him with, but placing a strong reliance on the affection of his people, he left England to meet six thousand troops which Philip of Valois had granted to Charles of Blois to conquer Brittany.

The people of the Duchy received him gladly, and rose universally in his behalf; but he was unfortunately, through treachery, taken prisoner shortly after his arrival, and sent to Paris, where Philip closely confined him in a dungeon in the Tower of the Louvre. Charles of Blois now thought himself indisputably master of Brittany, but he was mistaken.

The young wife of John de Montford, who, as Froissart saith, "possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion," appeared before the people with her infant son, appealed to their courage and devotion in her husband's cause, and vowed to still prosecute the contest if they would assist her, employing the

whole of her wealth in the service. She was beautiful and young, and her appearance had a strong effect upon the stalwart men who had fought so bravely for her husband. She spoke passionately and eloquently, and when, with tearful eyes, she presented her young child to them and said, "Look at my little child here, he shall be his father's restorer, and shall do you much service," they all swore to win the duchy for her, or perish in the attempt. She went through Brittany, from town to town, making similar addresses, and everywhere the people flocked to her standard. She sent over to England to hurry the promised aid, and then took up her quarters in Hennebon, the strongest castle in Brittany; it stood upon the coast, the sea washing close up to its walls. Here she was soon besieged by Charles of Blois, with a large army; but she animated her people by donning the steel casque, the hauberk and sword, rode through the town, and encouraged them by her example; and when arrows were flying in showers, she would mix with those who were exposed to them, and by her gallant harangues would stimulate them to defy anything. When sorties were made, she headed them, and then the bands who followed, composed of young men principally, were resistless, cutting their opposers to pieces, and always retiring with signal success crowning their efforts.

Right gallantly did they hold out against Charles of Blois, who possessed an army sufficient to have overwhelmed the little town and its inhabitants, if he could have got admission. But at last provisions began to grow scarce, there was no sign of an appearance of succour from England, the daily skirmishes, which were desperate, were thinning the little band, and there was an enemy in the camp, in the shape of the Bishop of Leon, who, having a nephew named Sir Hervé de Léon, one who had proved a villanous traitor to John de Montfort, and was now with Lord Charles of Blois, essayed to make the people render up the city to the French, not failing to give an exaggerated view of the horrors of starvation if they persisted in holding out, and the dreadful consequences which would ensue if their enemies proved successful and carried the town by storm.

For some time his appeals and exhortations were fruitless; the gallant townsmen, unheeding his croakings, still fought desperately and nobly; even the women and maidens, influenced by the intrepidity of the young Countess, lent their aid to their brothers, fathers, and relations, and appeared upon the walls discharging pots of quick lime, and other missiles, against the foe. At this period the Countess headed a gallant sortie against the French camp, which she burned and destroyed, while the French were attacking the barriers of the town. In returning she was chased, and prevented entering Hennebon for five days, but at last she returned with five hundred men instead of three, and galloping boldly between the French army and the ramparts, entered Hennebon at sunrise by a private postern, which was opened for her without the French being able to prevent her.

The constant whining anticipations of evil, which the Bishop of Léon took every opportunity of pouring into the ears of the people, as the protraction of the siege made the provisions grow frightfully scarce, made the noble-hearted Countess fear that the people would capitulate, and ruin for ever all prospects she had of keeping the Duchy for her infant son. Not that she had from the behaviour of the people any right or cause to think so, but she could not see the pale, wan faces of the gallant fellows, the thin and wasted forms of the females around her, without having a dismal foreboding, that if succour did not speedily arrive, the Bishop's exhortations would prove, —nay, must prove, successful.

Day after day did she visit the highest ramparts of the castle, and stretch her eyes seaward along the whole line of the horizon in vain expectation of seeing the fleet containing the troops Edward had promised to send her; but save a straggling fishing boat here and there, nought met her eye, and she visited the walls with a heavy heart, but with an appearance of cheerfulness, to endeavour to cheer up those who were famishing for want, but whose courage and devotion in her behalf had never yet flagged. The old Bishop worked on like an old mole, still speaking fair, but doing his best to undermine the people's faith and steadiness. He sneaked out of the town, held a conference with his nephew, Sir Hervé de Léon, and promised him admission to the town, telling him he had gained many of the lords over to his side, which was no farther true than—as in all governments and peerages there always has been, and most likely will be, while governments continue as they are now—a number of croaking old women, who, not having any courage themselves, are ready to undergo any degradation rather than hazard their life or property for the public good.

There were a few of this class in Hennebon, and the Bishop made a boast of them, as being the voice of the people, and representing their feelings and wishes. The Countess got inkling of this treachery, and she immediately summoned all the people, and begged of them, for the love of God, not to desert her; that the succours would surely arrive; that she was certain they had only been delayed by some unforeseen circumstances, for the English, when once they had passed their word, never broke it, and the promises of Edward to her had been most sacred. She asked only for three days, and then, if the succours did not arrive, she would yield up the town, and, with her infant, if Charles of Blois shewed her so much mercy, retire to the interior of the country to die. The best and bravest band in the castle formed round her, and elevating their bright swords in the air, vowed to fight for her to the last in spite of aught; the rest consented to wait the three days, and even then acknowledged their hearts were so devoted to the fair young Countess, that if there was a possibility to still longer hold out, they would not capitulate. The bishop croaked away most unmercifully, arguing and protesting against further delay, and in the midst of his oratory, a few of the sturdiest warriors, who did not understand surrendering while they had life, unceremoniously interrupted him, and handing him out of the Countess' presence, showed him into the streets, at the same time bidding him be thankful for his sacred habit, vowing that it alone saved his life. That day passed away, the second followed, and still no arrival of the English. Sir Hervé de Léon advanced upon the city with a large troop, expecting to have the gates open to receive him, the bishop, his uncle, having promised him as much. The Countess was eaten up with despair; she fancied the people, worn out with famine, were preparing to open the gates to receive them; the band in the meantime were preparing to resist to the last—perish rather than surrender; she thought the hour had arrived to show the destruction of her hopes, and she wept bitterly.

In the impulsiveness of her despair, she once more sought the topmost walls; she stood alone, stretching her eyes achingly seaward, straining them to see some sign for the aid which was now of such vital importance to her. But no, the horizon line was without a speck upon it: she fell upon her knees, and in utter-

hopelessness prayed to the Virgin for help, and then she grew more calm, but it was almost the calmness of madness: there sat she for two long hours, wearying her eyes with gazing in the direction which the English ships should come. A strong wind arose, and as it blew on that height fiercely in her face, she knew it was fair for their approach, and she continued her prayers for their arrival, when suddenly, like silent spectres, she saw little dim specks in the horizon —first one, then a second, a third, and a fourth. She gazed breathlessly, put her hand to her heart to prevent its violent beating—for it seemed as though it would burst from its resting place. She waited long and eagerly to be quite certain her eyes deceived her not, but she saw the horizon crowding with them, and oh, joy! the wind increased and blew them swiftly towards her; she breathed a fervent prayer of thankfulness to the Virgin, and almost screaming with delight, she descended the tower, sought her followers, and acquainted them with the glad tidings, crying out with the greatest enthusiasm—

"I see the succours I have so long expected and wished for, coming."

The people all rushed to the ramparts and windows of the castle, and saw a large fleet of ships crowding every stitch of canvass they could set, and with a brisk wind bearing down to Hennebon; they gave tremendous cheers, and then rushing back to the walls, answered Sir Hervé Léon's polite invitation to open the gates with a shower of arrows so thick and well-delivered, that, as Froissart says, "he was much vexed at it;" even the old croaking lords who had sided with the old bishop told him, "that they were not now inclined to follow his advice;" and the same warriors who had removed him from the Countess' presence, took him under their guidance, and marched him out of the town altogether, informing him, for his satisfaction, that if he had not been a bishop that they would have hung him from the walls for the French to shoot at. He professed himself rather dissatisfied with them, and told them he would come no more among them, and they requested him to fully understand that they would take care he shouldn't.

In the meantime, the English ships, which had been delayed by contrary winds, crowded all sail for fear they should be too late. Burying their vessels under such a press of sail as almost to put their heads under water, they made the spray fly in sheets before their prows, and then seemed as though they should be too late "to be in the fun." With the brisk wind they had they were not long in making the run to Hennebon; and anchoring beneath the walls, lost no time in pouring forth their troops, as well as a very large store of provisions, which arrived as seasonably as themselves. What glad hearts were there when it was known that the "pride of chivalry," Sir Walter Manny, and his irresistible followers, had come to their aid! the people were wild with delight, and the fair young countess received them with every demonstration of respect and gladness. Trumpets were blown, music played, flags raised everywhere, and no longer was there any thought of surrendering. The French, on the contrary, were eaten up with vexation; they furnished an enormous battering engine, which they plied vigorously all that night and the next day. After Sir Walter and his followers had dined with the Countess, Wat Tyler entered, and told him the engine was doing considerable damage, and he thought it would be no very difficult matter to capture it; the Countess fixed her beautiful eyes upon him admiringly, and praised his valour for counselling such advice, but did not think it possible to be accomplished. Sir Walter laughed, and said—

"My bold squire thinks no feat of arms, however daring and hazardous, impossible of accomplishment; and, I confess, I am somewhat of his opinion. I know all my men are, and would, small as is their number, attempt the capture of the kingdom of France if I led them on, aye, and would lay their bones there rather than retreat one step if I still advanced."

"I have often heard it said you English fear nothing but your God and a dishonourable action—that you are fast friends and terrible foes."

"I have not the honour to be English born, lady," replied Sir Walter Manny. "I should be proud to be a native of the land where bravery and honour are cherished, and meanness and all despicable acts are scorned. But it is the country of my adoption; I fight for it, I live for it, and will die for it, and so please heaven, will lay my bones there."

"And having won the love of an English maiden, will wed there," said the Countess, with a laugh. Sir Walter looked for a moment confused, and Wat turned away his head; but the knight recovered himself, and said—

"I will not deny loving an English maiden—I do love one truly, with pure thought and high devotion, but her heart is not for me—'twas won by one of her own land ere I saw her, and her memory, her vision, like a bright angel shedding a glory round my unsullied sword, is the mistress for whom I essay for glory, whom I wear in my heart of hearts, and for whose dear sake I will do all that a knight fearful of nothing under heaven but dishonour can accomplish; and for her as well as for you, sweet Countess, will I take yon engine."

"I will not fail you in your first expedition," exclaimed Sir Yves de Tresiquidi, a stout knight of Brittany, who had performed many gallant achievements in the fair Countess's cause.

"Nor I," cried the Lord of Landreman, also a strenuous supporter of the noble lady's.

"Then, if you please, we will arm and sally forth at once," exclaimed Sir Walter; and then turning to Wat, he said, "see that Leowulf, and a hundred of the best men, my own particulars, are ready immediately."

"They are ready; I bade them arm as I came hither," replied Wat. "I knew you would not miss such a pleasant adventure."

"You were right, Wat," cried Sir Walter. "Now, as our friend Leowulf would say, 'we will shew them some right down English play.' When you are quite ready, noble sirs," he added, turning to the two nobles who had already spoken, "we will depart."

"We are at your service now," was the reply of Sir Yves de Tresiquidi. "Our followers are always under arms during this siege, and a word is enough to make them go anywhere where glory is to be gained."

"I am glad to hear it," said Sir Walter joyously; "and, fair Countess, if we do not break yon engine to pieces ere we return, you will see no more of—at least Walter Manny, or his followers."

"Noble knight!" replied the Countess, her bright eyes flashing with animation at his words, "you make my heart bound to hear you. I am proud that my poor person should have such brilliant chevaliers as supporters, and would that I knew how I could shew you the high estimation in which I hold your services; I would most joyously give the token, were it in my power."

"I can speak for the Englishmen, fair lady," said Wat suddenly, and with enthusiasm. "A smile upon your beautiful face, a gentle glance from your bright eyes, kind words from your soft lips, and with the remembrance of your being a woman, they will think

themselves well rewarded for shedding their best blood in your service."

"You are poetical and romantic," exclaimed the Countess, with a pleasant smile. "I perceive that your countrymen, to their other qualifications, have that of gallantry to add."

"Aye," in all senses of the word," said Sir Walter, "unaccompanied by any frivolity."

"Well," observed the Countess, laughing, and a blush mantling her beautiful face as she spoke, "not only will I give the smile, the gentle glance, and kind words, but a kiss to each if they prove successful, and will commence with you, Sir Squire. And I hope," she added, playfully, "that the last boon will not destroy the value of the first."

"On the contrary—enhance it," exclaimed Sir Walter, gleefully. "And I beg that I may be next to my fortunate squire."

"Certainly, if you wish it," said the Countess.

She was about to say something further, when a loud crash was heard, accompanied by a great shout, and a retainer appeared to say, that the French were making considerable havoc with their battering engine. He said that the people who were on the walls to oppose its effects prayed for assistance, or they feared that they should be unable to prevent the French making a breach.

Sir Walter instantly took leave of the Countess, and, accompanied by Wat and the two Bretons, he departed to assault and gain possession of the engine. He was joined by Leowulf, a hundred archers, and fifty men of his own followers; while Sir Yves de Tresiquidi and the Lord of Landreman brought to the conflict two hundred archers and a hundred men-at-arms. They quitted the town by a private gate, and silently made for the machine, which was attended by four hundred archers and nearly three hundred men-at-arms. As soon as Sir Walter and his people drew nigh, he ordered the archers to shoot, and they obeyed him with their usuaal alacrity, discharging their arrows with such extraordinary speed and precision, that the French were unable to withstand it, and gave ground; then, with the well-known cry of—

"A Manny! a Manny! St. George for England! a Manny: a Manny!"

Sir Walter, followed by Wat Tyler, Michael, and Leowulf, supported by the Bretons, fell upon those who surrounded the machine, and after a desperate fight they all fled—the machine was overturned and broken to pieces: the French rallied and returned, were repulsed and again fled; they were closely followed to their tents, which were speedily overturned and set fire to, before a sufficient number of the French army could get in motion to prevent them. When they had done all the damage they could, and perceived there were two or three thousand men preparing to attack them, they retreated, but at a very slow pace. A number of knights and horsemen galloped after them, and got in advance of their men, indicating their intention of making mince-meat of the English and Bretons; they uttered loud shouts and hootings, but to their annoyance the English did not increase their speed,—slackened it rather, and let them come up with them at a round pace. As they came galloping on, sure of good support from those who followed, Sir Walter laughed, and turning to Wat, said—

"Don't you think, Wat, we could stop the career of a few of these coming brawlers?"

"Aye," replied Wat, "and send them back as fast as they came—perhaps faster."

"Hurrah!" cried Michael, "let us have a rap at them."

"So we will, my bonny Michael," exclaimed Sir Walter, enthusiastically; "may I never be embraced by my mistress and dear friend, if I enter castle or fortress before I have unhorsed one of these gallopers. How say you, my Lord of Landreman, and bold Sir Yves de Tresiquidi, will you follow?"

"To the death!" they both cried, and as he couched his spear and turned the head of his bonny horse, Tricksy, to meet the foe, they followed his example, and with a loud hurrah, advanced upon them at full gallop. They met; the shock was tremendous; "many legs were made to kick the air," says Froissart. The fight soon grew desperate, for the soldiery kept arriving from the French camp, and the English disdained to give ground, until the number against them was four times their own. Then they commenced a slow retreat, and disputed every inch of ground until they reached the fosse that surrounded the castle, and then a band of townsmen who had witnessed their gallant actions from the walls, sallied forth and joined them. Their united attack was tremendous; they ranged themselves along the fosse, and led on by Wat Tyler, whom Sir Walter had sent to head them, to give him a good opportunity of signalising himself, they assaulted the French with such impetuosity, that they bore all before them.

Wat Tyler, for the first time a leader, determined not to do wrong to the confidence Sir Walter had placed in him; he flew here and there, dauntless as a lion, making all opposition to him fruitless, cheering on his followers with a loud voice, rich with animation and enthusiasm, and they following, doing deeds, excited by his example, which would before have appeared to them incredible. Michael followed him like a shadow, going where he went, fighting where he fought, cheering as he cheered, and laughing death in the face as fearlessly as the bravest of the brave.

Leowulf remained with Sir Walter, plied his sword with the same vigour and dexterity as ever, seconding Sir Walter most ably, and making the French wonder from what giant's loins so terrible and invincible a being had sprung. At length they gave ground everywhere, a retreat was sounded, and they retired precipitately to their camps. They were pursued for some distance, and numbers of them cut down; but Sir Walter having followed them as far as he could without venturing into the arms of the whole army, ordered the return, and they were all soon once more in the town of Hennebon, having covered themselves with glory.

As they reached the castle, the young Countess came forth to meet them; she had seen from the castle the whole of the conflict, and her heart glowed at the brilliant feats achieved in her service; so when she came before them she thanked them almost with tears in her eyes, her heart was so full.

Sir Walter, to change the subject, for her emotion was evident to all, said, laughingly—

"You have kept your promise in all but one thing; you have given us the smile, the gentle glance, and kind words, but we have not had the kiss."

The Countess blushed up to the eyes, but the next moment she threw up her head proudly, and with eyes sparkling with the brilliancy of diamonds, exclaimed,—

"Ye have kept your words with me nobly, and shame be upon me and mine if I forfeit my promise in one point; you will not take my 'haviour as unwomanly or unbeseeming what is due to modesty, but as the earnest tribute of thanks a full heart pays ye. Stand forth, Sir Squire," she added, addressing Wat; "proud may Sir Walter be in having you for a follower and friend; proud must be the mother

who bore you; proud are my people to have had you for a leader; and proud am I to know thy gallantry was exercised in my behalf. In addition to the warmest thanks I can bestow, I fulfil my promise to you first, for to you was the promise made." She advanced towards him, he dropped gracefully upon one knee, and, bending over him, she kissed his forehead; "and then, with a most cheerful countenance, she kissed Sir Walter Manny, and all his companions, one after the other, like a noble and valiant dame." *

So discomfited were the French by their defeat, that the next morning they raised the siege and departed, the townspeople, headed by Wat Tyler, hanging on their rear, and doing them terrible damage, and then returned to Hennebon. Lord Lewis of Spain, who had the command of the army during the temporary absence of Charles of Blois, made for Auri, where Lord Charles was before. In his way he arrived at a castle called Le Conquêt, which, after besieging for two days, he carried; and leaving a French garrison there, he made for the town of Dinant. The news of the capture of Le Conquêt soon reached the ears of the Countess, and she told Sir Walter Manny he would add to his glory by winning it back. Sir Walter, never averse to obtain laurels, took the hint, summoned his followers, was speedily before Le Conquêt, and as speedily wrested it from the conquerors, replaced the former possessor, and returned to Hennebon. In a few days they learned that Lord Lewis of Spain had taken the port of Quimperlé, and Sir Walter was very anxious to win it from him, as well as to have a battle with him, and he proposed an expedition to follow and attack him, and all the knights in Hennebon gladly consented to follow him. With three thousand archers they embarked, and shortly gained the port of Quimperlé, took all the ships belonging to the Lord Lewis, landed, and divided themselves into three divisions, each taking a different path, to make sure of overtaking the foe, who was in the country, pillaging and burning all before him.

One division was headed by Sir Walter Manny, the second by Wat Tyler, and the third by Sir Amauri de Clisson, seconded by Sir Yves de Tresiquidi, the Lord of Landreman, the governor of Guingamp, and various other bold knights; it was Wat Tyler's fate to first fall in with the foe. Lord Lewis having heard of Sir Walter's arrival, was retreating with his whole army; but seeing the division headed by Wat, perceiving it was not a third the number of his own, and being unable to retreat, he attacked our hero and his little division. For two hours they gallantly withstood the whole brunt of Lord Lewis's attack; several times the Bretons would have retreated, the numbers against them were so overwhelming, but Wat rallied them again and kept them to their duty; just, however, when it was impossible longer to resist the superiority of numbers the French possessed, Sir Walter Manny with his division arrived, and, with his men fresh, set upon the foe with tremendous vigour. Almost immediately after his arrival, the third division came up, and Lord Lewis was everywhere defeated. The slaughter was fearful; out of six thousand men which Lord Lewis had with him, three hundred only escaped, and a favourite nephew of his, named Alphonso, was slain. With much difficulty he got on board a lique or small craft, and got off unprevented; Sir Walter Manny followed as quickly as he was able, and chased him to Redon, and from there on towards Rennes, which Lord Lewis succeeded in gaining; and then the knight, with the English and Bretons, returned to Redon: they stayed here a night, and embarked the next morning for Hennebon. Adverse winds, however, drove them into a port near Dinant, where they landed, and marched through the country all day, until towards evening they reached a handsome castle named Roche Perion; and then Sir Walter, the love of adventure so strong within him, could not pass it, fatigued as he was, without trying to subdue it, and mentioned his wishes to his followers. They replied they would follow him to death, and at once commenced the assault: it was very severe, and two knights, named Sir William Boteler of Warrington, and Sir Matthew Trelawney, were, with others, severely wounded, and carried to a neighbouring field. At this time, the brother of the Governor of Roche Perion, captain of a fort near at hand, called Faonet, hearing the noise of the attack, came to his assistance, and encountered the wounded knights and squires, whom he immediately made prisoners and carried off to Faonet; two or three, who were bearing the wounded, brought intelligence of this to Sir Walter; he immediately called off his men from the attack, and at the top of their speed made after the Captain of Fort Faonet, but he succeeded in reaching his castle before them. They attacked it fiercely, although they were terribly fatigued, but night came on, there was no moon, and it was pitch dark; they were therefore compelled to wait until morning.

In the meanwhile, however, the Governor of Roche Perion went to Dinant, roused the governor, who then raised six thousand men. A spy informed Sir Walter of this, and he communicated the intelligence to his followers, telling them, if they would support him, he would fight while he had a drop of blood in his veins, rather than retire without rescuing the prisoners; but as there seemed little prospect of their beating more than twice their number, and after that conquering the fort, they strongly advised him to retire, and gave their advice with such arguments that he gave in to them, and they marched forward, took a castle called Goy la Forêt in their way, and then returned to Hennebon, where they were received with the greatest acclamations.

Lord Charles of Blois was in a terrible rage when Lord Lewis appeared before him with two hundred men, the remnant of six thousand he had left with him, and he vowed he would subdue Hennebon, and make the Countess of Montfort repent ever having taken arms against him. The Countess had intelligence of his intention, and took care to have, under the superintendence of Sir Walter Manny, the town well provisioned for a longer time than Charles of Blois would like to stay before it—a strong reinforcement of men also, and a large quantity of military stores. When the town was again besieged, and skirmishes were frequent, the French still had the worst of it; numbers of engines were made for casting stones, but they were overthrown, taken, and destroyed, and the men of Hennebon would, when the French, repulsed with terrific slaughter, retired from frequent contests, call to them in a sneering manner, "Go your way, and seek your friends who are sleeping on the plains of Quimperlé!"

One day a spy brought intelligence that Sir John Boteler and Sir Matthew Trelawney had been brought from Faonet to Lord Charles' camp, and, to gratify the spite of Lord Lewis of Spain, in revenge for the death of his nephew Alphonso, they were to be put to death. Sir Walter Manny vowed they should not perish without a bold effort to save them, and stated his intention, with his own immediate followers, to attempt their rescue. There were hundreds of the Bretons who volunteered to accom-

* Froissart.

pany him; and when the number who were to form the expedition were chosen, Sir Walter divided them into two divisions, giving the care of one division to Sir Amauri de Clisson, and the other he led himself, composed chiefly of his own followers, for they had desperate work to do and needed desperate hearts. The first division started first, and rushed, as was concerted, with great shouts upon the nearest tents of the French, who getting ready to behead the two knights, had not attempted that day to assault the town; they attacked them, overthrew and burnt them, and soon troop after troop was in the engagement. When Sir Amauri had sufficiently attracted their attention, and drawn upon him nearly the whole army to punish his temerity, he retreated towards the gate by which he had issued forth.

In the interim, Sir Walter, with his followers, went silently out of one of the posterns, and, guided by a spy, made for the tent which contained the two knights prisoners. They found them slightly guarded, for the manœuvre of Sir Amauri de Clisson had been so well executed, that the whole army was in motion, following him to the barriers. It was but the work of a few minutes to cut down the guards, to unbind the knights, and placing them upon swift steeds, they despatched them at once to Hennebon: and they had hardly escaped, when a large division of the French army intercepted them. Sir Walter instantly attacked them, and the fight was fierce and hot—for his followers were all stalwart men, used to the most perilous warfare, reckless of life, and lion-hearted to a man. They cut their way through them, gained the barriers, joined Sir Amauri de Clisson, fresh men poured out from the town, all eager to have a share in the fray; their efforts were so tremendous that the army gave ground, and when intelligence was brought them of the rescue of the two knights, their rage knew no bounds.

Lord Lewis growing tired of the contest—for he was gaining more blows than honor—pretended to be so mortified at the rescue, that he retired to his tent. The arrows of the English and Bretons flew around like hail, and so incessantly, that the French suffered severely; they retreated, and were followed closely up till they reached their tents, and then the gallant conquerors once more retired to their little town, the victors over more than five times their number.

Lord Charles of Blois began to find that Hennebon was too strong and well defended for him to capture, well as he was provided with men and ammunition; he, therefore, called a council of the lords with him, to see what was best to be done; he could not be more tired of the war than were they, and they were heartily glad of any excuse to advise him to abandon it. They proposed to him, accordingly, to offer a truce to last until Whitsuntide, to which he consented, and the terms were sent to the Countess of Montford, immediately they had decided upon adopting it; she asked of Sir Walter Manny his advice. Just at the time she received the herald, despatches arrived to him from England, in which Edward had advised the acceptance of a truce, if one should be offered, and he therefore counselled her to agree to it; she did, and the treaty was duly signed and sealed. Lord Charles withdrew his men, and went to another part of Brittany, and the Countess of Montford went to England upon a visit to Edward, leaving Sir Walter Manny the care of the castle and city of Hennebon. After a stay of some short time, she returned with fresh troops and military stores, under the command of Lord Robert d'Artois, a favourite of Edward's; in their way they fell in with a fleet commanded by Lord Lewis of Spain—they gave them battle, but a tremendous storm arose, and caused the fleets to separate. Lord Robert landed near Vannes, a strong city, the inhabitants of which sided with Lord Charles of Blois, and besieged it; the Countess remained with him.

Sir Walter Manny soon heard of their arrival in Brittany, and not feeling inclined to suffer himself to be cooped up within the walls of Hennebon any longer, he resolved to join Lord Robert d'Artois in his attack upon Vannes. Accordingly he gave up the charge of Hennebon to Lord Cadodal; and taking with him a hundred men-at-arms and archers, he soon reached the army before Vannes; he was accompanied by Sir Yves de Tresiquidi, Wat Tyler, Michael, and Leowulf. Rubacelle was also with them; no fear of personal danger could keep her from following Wat Tyler, and the example which the Countess of Montfort had shewn of courage and firmness under the greatest perils and hazards, had made her desirous of emulating it.

The Countess had exhibited an utter disregard of fear for the sake of her infant son, and Wat Tyler was as dear to the heart of Rubacelle as that child was to its mother. If, therefore, the Countess could be bold and firm, why should not she? Thus did she argue with herself, and it made her resolve not to be persuaded by Wat to remain in Hennebon, while he was wading through danger. As she expected, Wat endeavoured to induce her to stay in the castle; but his persuasions equalled not her determination, and he was compelled to assent to her accompanying him.

Shortly subsequently to their arrival at Vannes, the attack was commenced; it lasted all day without the army making much impression upon the city, further than committing terrific slaughter, the English archers literally sweeping down the French from the walls by hundreds. When night approached, the army retired, and the townspeople thought the battle was over for the time being, but after the English had refreshed themselves, they, by the advice of Sir Walter Manny, were led on to the attack again; the troops were divided into three divisions, one led by Sir Robert d'Artois, the second by the Earl of Salisbury, and the third by Sir Walter Manny; the two first attacked the barriers in two different places, and Sir Walter Manny, followed by his daring people, scaled the walls in a third part. So hotly did Sir Walter and his people assault when once upon the walls, that they drove all before them; they were enabled, by desperate fighting, to open the barriers, and the other two divisions poured in with such vigour, that the French flew in all directions, leaving the English and Bretons masters of the town.

When the fight was over, Wat's first care was to discover Rubacelle, whom he had left in his tent, with strict orders not to approach the town until the fight was ended, but she was no where to be seen; everywhere he searched, but without discovering her. At length, on his return into the town, he met with Leowulf, who, with his huge sword reeking still with the blood of those he had slain in battle resting upon his shoulder, was hurrying along. The moment he perceived Wat, he cried out lustily—

"Ho! ho! Wat, I am glad I met with thee—I have been searching for thee. Michael sent me to thee, to bid thee haste to the ramparts where we scaled the walls, for thy little foot-page is struck with an arrow."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Wat, with a sudden start, Leowulf's words falling like a thunderbolt upon his brain; "you cannot speak truth?"

"I do, most sad truth," replied Leowulf, gravely; "would that I did not, for I confess my heart yearned

kindly to that gentle boy, and I vow to God that I would give the best steel casque and hauberk ever fashioned by the cunningest smith the world e'er saw, to come across the knave who drew the bow that sped the arrow. I'd cut him in half, as sure as I am Leowulf, the Saxon smith. Ho! ho! that he stood before me now!"

"Leowulf! Leowulf!" cried Wat, hastily, speaking as if he doubted his senses; "dost thou tell me that my beloved boy is wounded?"

"Aye! loth am I to say it," replied Leowulf, dropping his eyes with mournful expression; "and I would advise thee haste, for I do not believe there is half-an-hour's life in him. Follow me, Wat; I'll show thee the spot where he lies, supported by Michael, asking for thee."

"Lead on, Leowulf, at thy best speed!" cried Wat, almost choking with excitement; "minutes will seem hours until I reach his side."

"My lagging shall not stay thee!" replied Leowulf; and turning, led the way to the ramparts at a speed which seemed to defy competition; but still Wat was in advance of him, so great was his perturbation of mind; they traversed the streets quickly, and soon reached the ramparts, hurrying past the dead and the dying, unheeding the groans of the wounded, the tears and anguish of those who were searching for wounded or slain relatives, quite absorbed in the mission upon which they were bound. They came to the spot where Sir Walter had first scaled the walls, and here it was that Leowulf said he left Michael supporting "his little foot page;" but when they arrived, they were not there. They, however, hurried on a little further, where the place was quiet and retired, and soon they heard a faint voice say—

"Oh, he will come—he will not be very long, will he? He is not wounded or hurt, I fervently hope. I have prayed so earnestly to the Virgin to shield him from all danger—to avert all evil from him, that she could not but listen to my prayers; and he is safe and unscathed. Oh, good Michael! he will not be away very long, will he? for I feel growing fainter. He will come, will he not?"

The voice was Rubacelle's—it was faint and low, but there was a clear hollow tone in it that seemed to pierce Wat's heart as he heard them with the words, "Here is death!" He sprung forward as Michael, in husky tones, was bidding her be of good cheer—that Wat would be at her side shortly; and when her eye lighted upon him, she uttered a faint scream, and stretched out her hands towards him. She was reclining upon the ground, partly supported by Michael, whose care had made him throw a mantle over her. In her breast was an arrow sticking, and from the wound the blood was pouring fast, although Michael had tried hard to stop it. He yielded up his place to Wat, who knelt down, and twining his arms round her, made her recline upon his bosom. In a moment he saw there was no hope—she was mortally wounded beyond redemption, and, for the first time, he felt how strangely she had wound herself round his heart. Now that he was about to lose her for ever, the remembrance of her guileless love, her pure devotion for him, her constant sweetness and earnest efforts for his happiness, rose up in array before him more strongly than they had ever done, and he found his own heart was too full for him to utter a word. Rubacelle perceived his emotion, and dropped her head upon his bosom, without being able also to speak.

Michael, who alone, beside Wat, was aware of Rubacelle's disguise, felt strongly the anguish her death would occasion to Wat more than had she been really "a gentle boy," and being quite conscious of her devotedness to him, having seen how continued her attentions were to him, and how very sweet and quiet she had been in all her ministering, he could not help being much attached to her, thinking her most unfortunate in loving one who could not return her affection to the same extent it was borne by her, and sympathising with the sad hopelessness, which he knew, in spite of all Wat's kindness, must be preying upon her heart. He saw in a moment, by Wat's face, by his silence, that there was a throe of agony in his heart, which it was almost worse than death to endure, and at the moment would have given up freely, without a sigh, every prospect of his own happiness to have relieved them from the anguish he knew they both felt. But it could not be, and after one or two attempts to clear his voice, he said—

"I am very glad you have come, Wat; I despatched Leowulf for you the moment I found this gentle one upon the ground, struck by an arrow. I was almost afraid that you would not be here—that waiting upon Sir Walter, you would have been kept away until—until—"

"For God's sake tell me how this happened!" cried Wat suddenly, by a tremendous exertion repressing the burning, choking sensation in his chest and throat, which the pain of finding Rubacelle in this situation caused.

"I know no more than this," replied Michael, "that after I separated from you, when the fight was over, one of the Countess' people came up to me, and told me I had better seek for you or haste myself to the ramparts, for that your little foot page had been struck down by an arrow the same moment that a brother of his had. They were the two last to reach the wall, and had fallen when that heavy shower of arrows greeted us upon our arrival. I looked hastily about for you, for you had not long quitted me, but you were not in sight anywhere, and I hurried this way, bringing Leowulf, whom I met on the way, with me. When I reached the spot where we first set foot on this accursed ground, I saw that the Breton had spoken truth—stretched almost lifeless upon the ground, bleeding profusely from the arrow's wound, lay the gentle one. I raised him and bore him hither, despatching Leowulf for you. This is all I know respecting it, and this is a knowledge so sad, that it is far too much to know."

"Is there no help at hand?—this wound may not be fatal," exclaimed Wat, earnestly. "If the arrow be skillfully extracted, the hurt may not be mortal. Fly, Michael! seek for Geoffrey de Vienne, he is the Countess's leech, and esteemed most skilful in these matters; you will find him tending the wounded of our people. You go with him, good Leowulf, and relax not speed or perseverance till you discover him and bring him hither. Haste thee, my dear friend,—one moment's delay may cost many years of this kindest one's life."

"If speed could purchase life, I would outstrip the wind," cried Michael, and darted off, followed closely by Leowulf, who, notwithstanding his heavy accoutrements, moved as lightly and swiftly as though he were clothed in gauze.

When Wat was alone with Rubacelle, he bent on her face an earnest gaze, to see whether he could not trace some indication to shew him that life would not yet depart; but the pallid features, the sunken eye, the thin blue line around the mouth, told a tale too certain—too fatally true to admit a shadow of hope. He perceived that she had fainted, and her pale, calm face looked so quiet and still, that, but for the faint throbbing of her heart, he could

scarce believe she was not already in the sleep of death. He parted her hair from her forehead, for it had straggled confusedly over it, and his heart smote within him, to think that one so fair, so beautiful, so pure, should die so young — should perish in the spring-time of her youth, even though there was a canker in the heart that made her life clouded beneath the heavy mantle of blighted hopes; he sighed bitterly, and in his heart wished that fate had ordained them never to meet, or that he had been so situated as never to have been the cause of sorrow to her—for such he had, although he was blameless of intending it. She lay very still, and he watched the rapid changes which coming death was producing on her sweet face; she was still in a swoon, and he would have given all he possessed for a little water. An armed Breton came sauntering by—Wat called him, and he approached; he recognised Wat, and saluted him respectfully.

"Go, my good fellow, and get me some water for one here who is dying!" said Wat to him with much earnestness.

"It is a difficult thing to be found now," replied the man; "but I will see what I can do."

"A short distance from here to the left of yon grove of trees flows a stream," cried Wat; "I saw it as we fought our way into the town. Fly! a few minutes will take thee there and bring thee hither again."

"I have nothing to get it in," replied the man.

"Here!" said Wat, "take my casque." He unfastened his bascinet, and gave the helmet to the man, who took it and hastened away; he was not long gone, and brought it back filled with pure water. Wat thanked him heartily, and the man went his way on learning he could be of no further assistance. Wat bathed her temples and her lips, and shortly had the satisfaction of seeing her eyes open gently, and fasten their feeble gaze upon him. At first she did not appear to recognise him, but soon she knew the well-remembered lineaments of his face; and though it was evident she was suffering much pain, she smiled, and said in a soft low voice—

"I knew you would come. I knew you would not be long away from me—and I was right. Oh, Wat! I am so happy now that I am with you."

"Dear Rubacelle," exclaimed Wat, in a voice of emotion, "how has it happened that I find you thus? How is it that I should find thee here, and wounded, when thou didst promise me to remain in the tent until the battle was over?"

"And did I not, dear Wat, all the day long, when you were surrounded by death, and I knew not one moment from another that you would not be brought to me bleeding and lifeless? Oh, dear Wat, you know not how I have suffered with suspense, when I have known you to be in the midst of the most frightful danger, and I not by to see whether Heaven's goodness spared you, or its dispensation caused your death; and so, when to-night you advanced to the second attack, I followed you."

"Rubacelle!" exclaimed Wat, in a tone more of sadness than reproach.

"Dear Wat, this wound is by much not so painful to me as to remain in all the horrors of uncertainty, waiting for thy return from one of those dreadful encounters; and remember, Wat, the brave Countess of Montford has shown the weakest of our sex an example of courage and duty which it were shame in one placed as I have been not to have emulated. So thought I, Wat, and I followed thee in the hope that I might be near thee, and be so happy as to shield thee, or avert some blow from thee, which if thou didst receive might have cost thee thy life; but Heaven was not so bountiful, and a stray shaft has robbed me of all hope for the future of showing you that I have never forgotten that you have many times hazarded your life for me, and that I would be but too happy to die for thee, dear Wat; and would that the blow which now will make me sleep, never to wake again, had been received to have saved thy breast from harm!"

"My kind, affectionate-hearted Rubacelle," exclaimed Wat, reverently, "your remembrance of a simple service is too strong, and has led thee into this dangerous position; I will not reproach thee for what thy tenderness for me led thee to do, although it produces me so much pain—and thou too, albeit I trust the wound is not fatal. De Vienne will be here anon, and will remove this arrow, and restore thee to life."

"It were a vain hope, Wat," said Rubacelle, in a faint voice, "to think I should recover and live on, happy in thy kind smiles and gentle words, and be treated as I have ever been by thee, most tenderly. No, dear Wat, fondly as I might wish for so great a happiness to come to pass, it will never be; I feel the cold hand of death upon me, crawling over my frame, and gradually stealing away my strength and breath."

"Do not think so," cried Wat, "you are faint from loss of blood; hope on, all will yet be well."

"When I am in heaven," responded Rubacelle; "and so it should be—and 'twill be better to be so—for, oh, Wat! no being on earth ever loved another as I have thee. Thou wert the heart of my heart; and now the last breath is fluttering in my bosom, I may say so, and not take any shame to myself for want of maidenly modesty in telling thee so—thou wert my very being, Wat—my existence; what light, and air, and dew are to the sweetest flowers, wert thou to me: but thy heart was another's—one more fair and beautiful than I—but could not love thee better than I, if she could so well. But she does love thee, thou sayest—and I know thou lovest her—and this was before, long before we met, so there was no hope for me; and though I strove to believe that it did not pain me to know your heart was another's, that it was given to one who was all goodness, purity, and loveliness, and that with your unceasing kindness to me, I had no right to be sad, and look with a faint hope forward for a time that would make thee mine,—yet my heart would be sorrowful, and when I was alone, I could not but weep many bitter tears, much as I strove to check them, and feared that you would see I had been sorrowing for what might never be, and be distressed and hurt, and made by me unhappy. I tried very hard to conceal the worm that was eating into my heart, but I fear that it would have displayed itself at some time, when you would have been most grieved to discover it. Believe me, dear Wat, I would not, in thought or act, wrong the gentle being to whom thou hast given thy heart, to make my happiness as perfect as it could be; and thus, you see, heaven is calling me away from you, for indeed, indeed, Wat, I would rather die thus a thousand times than be the cause of one pang to thee, thou hast been so very good and kind to me."

"Do not talk of dying, Rubacelle," said Wat, his voice quivering with emotion; "thy wound is—"

"Fatal!" interrupted Rubacelle, very gently, and with a calm smile. "There is an indication on my heart which I cannot mistake; my time is come. I die young, Wat, it is true, and perhaps it is hard to die so young; but I have seen the fairest buds, giving promise of rare blossoms, blighted, fade away, and perish!

It is Heaven's will, and I may not repine: still hath there been little sunshine on my path. From a child I was immured in a lonely house, under the care of one who, though the kindest being under Heaven, was still, and sad, and solemn; the influence of a broken heart was on her thoughts and actions, and the lightest hours of my youth were impressed with her sorrowfulness and the house's loneliness. So passed every year until we met. You know the rest, and will cease to wonder that I find it not difficult to die. When I am gone, Wat, I know you will bear me in your memory kindly, but also think of me as one who knew no joy, no bliss so great on earth as that which would have been her's, could she have made thy happiness perfect and entire. Think of me as one whose heart was simple, whose intentions were good, whose entire love was thine, who, had she the magician's power, would have made a world for thee alone—she would, Wat, she would."

"I believe thee, dear Rubacelle," replied Wat, fervently; "I do believe thee, but—but thy words come like fire upon my heart. I cannot bear to think that thou must die."

"Nay, dear Wat, it is our common fate," said Rubacelle; "and it will be happier for us all that I should pass away thus early—will it not? Ah! turn not your head away; do not grieve, Wat—do not grieve for me; but let me see thee smile, and appear calm and cheerful, as though I were quitting thee for a place of sunshine and flowers, and believe that we shall meet again. Oh, Wat, we shall meet again!—the Almighty is bountiful to us all; and you have been good, and virtuous, and honourable, and the gates of heaven will be open for thee, as I trust they will be for me, and we shall meet again where there is all peace, where nought of disquiet ever enters, and be supremely happy. Wat, there is a film falling over my eyes—I am growing colder and colder, and I have the music of angels in my ears. Oh, dear Wat, that my dying wish could be granted! I would coin the dearest blessings a passionate heart could form, and utter them for thee. Let my face be nearer to thine, dear Wat, I can scarce see it," she said, feebly; and Wat raised her tenderly higher on his breast. She saw that there were tears rushing down his manly cheek, and a strong spasm ran through her on the instant; she was silent for a moment, and then ejaculated,—

"You would not have me render up my spirit with a pang of sorrow on it, would you, dear Wat?"

"Would to God!" groaned Wat, with anguish, "I could remove from thee all pain, all care, all sorrow, I would lay down my life this moment."

"No, no, Wat," she exclaimed, hurriedly; "there is Violet. Oh, no, you must not send her to an early grave with a broken heart—no, no, you must not say that; glad as such kind words make my heart I would not have her memory forgotten or injured by one thought of me."

"Nor is it," said Wat; "she is too pure, too good, too kind, ever to believe the love I bear you could lower her one degree in my heart."

"And you do love me, Wat?" whispered the dying girl, her voice growing more feeble every instant, "and you do love me? oh, bliss! I shall die so very happy. But as my eyes close for ever let me see thine look on me as gently and as tenderly as they have ever done, but let there be no tear in them; let me not think I have ever caused thee tears, but smile upon me as I have seen thee smile, and think me, as I am, very, very happy, for am I not resting my head upon thy bosom, have I not thy words in my ears that you love me, and will not my spirit pass away in thy arms? What could I hope for more than to die in thy arms, have thine eye upon me, hear thy words, and know that the last being on earth I saw, spoke to, and blessed was thee? so thou wilt be cheerful, and though I am dying, will not look sad, and dull, and full of regret—ah! thou dost turn thy head from me still—thine eyes are turned away—Wat—Wat, my sight is leaving me, look upon me, let me see thy loved face to the last."

But Wat could not bear it, he was compelled to turn his face away and cover it with his hand, to hide the scalding tears which rushed from his eyes in torrents; by a powerful exertion he repressed them, and at the earnest appeal of the gentle girl, whose spirit was fast quitting her frame, he turned his head towards her, gazed upon her with his eyes almost blinded with water; he saw her anxious white face turned towards him, and her eyes dim and nearly sightless fixed towards his own, but she scarce appeared to distinguish him, and he leaned his face nearer to hers, and then a sweet smile broke over her features, her face lighted up with joy, and she uttered, 'twas but a whisper—

"I can see you—I can see you, farewell! There are strange voices calling me. Wat, dearest, beloved Wat, farewell! Sir Walter Manny has a paper he will give you—it is from me to you—I did not forget your kindness then, I do not now, nor ever,—"

Her voice became almost inaudible, and Wat placed his face still closer to her's, until they touched, and then instantly, as a weary child would lay its head upon its mother's bosom, did she rest her face on his; a moment more, and she stretched forth her hands and placed them round his neck. He bit his lips until they bled, to stay the hot tears from falling upon her face. She moved a little more, and then her lips met his; he kissed her fervently, and it seemed as though a quiver passed through her frame; he heard her murmur, but so faint, it was scarcely to be caught,—

"The first and the last."

Another moment passed, and the pulsation of her heart was evidently fast decreasing; her breath came short and thick, and Wat felt the cold damp dew of death break out upon her forehead; she essayed to speak, and Wat bent his ear to her mouth, to catch the words.

"I have not forgotten John Chandos," she said; "tell him I remembered him in my dying hour—tell him I have not forgotten his kindness towards me, but bid him banish me from his memory. I knew what it was to bear the aching hopelessness of—no matter—tell him I blessed him with my dying breath, and prayed him to forget me. Wat, my sight is gone—I can see you no longer, but I know I am pillowed in thy arms—I know that my heart is to thine. Hark! do you not hear that voice, that music? Wat, dearest Wat, bless thee—bless thee, thou kindest heart—let me be laid where there is grass and flowers to grow over me—bless thee—there is—Violet—and thou, bless thee both. Indeed, I—I loved thee with my whole heart—and—and would have died for—for thee—for thee."

The last word was inaudible, it was followed by a long sigh, her arms compressed round his neck as though she pressed him to her heart, and then they relaxed, and lay motionless, and all became still and quiet, and no sound was near him save the murmur of the city, and he knew that she who lay on his bosom so calm and placid, as a tired infant sleeping upon its pillow, was dead.

For some time he knelt there, almost breathless, and without moving a muscle; then he laid her

gently down upon the earth, and hot painful tears dropped from his burning eyes upon her cold white face as he bowed his head in anguish over, and prayed with fervour and earnestness for her to heaven.

And so perished Rubacelle, the young and beautiful, in the very spring-time of her youth; a sweet flower cut down untimely—a young fair tree withered and destroyed while its first leaves were yet green; the gentlest, kindest, simplest heart, crushed at one blow, never to beat again. And so she lay there, as Wat thought, when his eyes, thronging with water, would not let him look upon her, as calm, and placid, and gentle as she had been while near him,—the same sweet smile upon her pale lips as when she was showing him some little attention, or striving with pleasant words and fond imagining to cheer him when she saw the thoughts of home, and those who were there were on his heart, and with heavy hand were pressing down his brow. There lay she dead; her spirit—one most gentle—passed away, never, never to return; and he knew he was looking his last upon her, and his heart throbbed as though it would burst; he was looking his last upon her—on her who would never more be at his side, with her mild, yet earnest eyes gazing upon him, to read his slightest wish, and minister to it; upon her who was no more to show him how fondly and faithfully one being could love another—how she could give up all the world for him, for him alone; one who would watch with tenderest care, with untiring patience, for every opportunity to do him service, to make him supremely happy. She was dead! and he was for ever, on earth, parted from one whose love for him was without taint.

The loss to Wat was greater, the shock more severe to him than he could have imagined—he could scarcely have credited that her death would have made him suffer so keenly; he felt as though it would overwhelm him, and he hung over her with his face buried in his hands, the victim of a paroxysm of grief the most violent. Yet it was not strange that he should have been thus affected; for nearly five years had they been in the closest and purest companionship, and during that long interval he had never known a time that she had appeared fretful, or peevish, or indisposed to comply with his slightest wish; never could he challenge a moment that he had found her possess the smallest infirmity of temper. She was always to him the most affectionate, earnest, devoted being under heaven; her nature was the simplest, most artless, most free from guile, he had, save Violet, ever seen—and the most affectionate; ever quiet and gentle, patient and unwearying in her acts of kindness to him, she had twined herself round his heart as the vine round its supporter, and was ever in his eyes putting forth green leaves, as day after day her gentleness, her sweet unselfishness, made her hold upon his heart stronger and stronger; his affection for her increased, and yet he had never forgotten, for one second, his first, his only love, Violet; he had not, in thought, or act, in one slight degree swerved in his affection from her—still he loved Rubacelle very dearly, very, very dearly, and now she was gone for ever, he felt how dearly. Had it been his lot to have been an orphan left with one sister, and that sister had clung to him, and spared neither pain, nor trouble, nor time to bring him content and happiness—had never ceased striving to produce a happy smile upon his face, to essay to banish from him all evils, all things that would tend to distress or vex him—had never tired in the gentlest attentions to him—uttering the fondest words, or meeting him with a kind smile and a shew of gladness as though his presence brought a joy that nought else on earth could have produced; had it been his lot to know all the while that her heart was aching with the gnawing of a sickening and a hopeless sorrow through him, which no time could alleviate, nothing soften, or which could not end until death terminated it; and yet ever in his presence, using strong exertions to make him believe that no such sorrow existed, but seeming always calm and glad, although the gladness was quiet and gentle, so as to make him now and then find a gush of tears rush up into his eyes to see the sweet patience that never murmured or complained, or breathed when he was near a sigh to show that perfect contentment did not reign in that heart whose worth was richer and purer than the most unalloyed gold or unflawed diamond—how would he have felt towards her? how should he have felt towards her? Should he not have loved her without one selfish thought—placed her in his heart of hearts, with all the purity and earnestness her devotion, her faith deserved! loved her as a brother so worshipped should have loved such a sister!

And thus did Wat love Rubacelle; he had never seen a day, an hour, in which she had not exhibited, quietly, without ostentation, but with enduring constancy, that he was the world which to her made life worth living for. Although there was not one hope that the dearest, only wish of her heart could be ever gratified, he had never seen her brow clouded by the sorrow which was preying like a killing worm upon her gentle heart; had never heard a sigh, a murmur, or complaint; had never, but when the subject was broached, seen a tear in her eye which should make him think that she had Violet in her memory, and was fretting that her lot had not been equally fortunate; he was never, could never be blind to the comprehensiveness of her devotion for him, nor fail to be grateful for the rich tribute of her dearest thoughts. He gradually repaid them out of the treasury of his heart. She was to him in all things a sister most adored; he had had such continual proofs of her love, that his nature, however it might have rebelled against parting with a portion of a love which was all devoted to Violet, was unable to withstand it; and as love will create love, so did her adoration of him win from him a strong love for her in return: he knew that his first act in her defence at Cadsant had won her gentle heart, had, without intending it, drawn the confession from her when once alluding slightly to the circumstance; and it was not wonderful that a young artless girl, with such a heart as Rubacelle's, should have given her whole soul to him, who possessed youthful, though manly beauty, the courage of a lion—had risked his life, without a thought of danger, in her defence; and so when he was inaugurated Sir Walter's squire, her tribute of flowers was a tribute of love as well. He learned, too, that when he lay dreaming of Violet at Cadsant, and waking suddenly, fancied he had heard a sigh, it was this gentle girl, who, without a thought that was not purity itself, had sat and watched by his pillow all that night long, because she saw that he looked pale when the ceremony of inauguration was over, and feared his arduous exertions in the field, and in her service, had made him ill. Besides these small acts of devotion, there were numberless little traits of kindness which had all a strong influence on his heart, and now that she lay before him, dead, they rose up in their full value, and showed him that he had lost for ever such a heart, such a faithful being as he might, under no changes or time, ever again meet with; she was gone, perished, never to return, and in that hour, and that one loss, he felt immeasurably desolate.

It was a relief to his overcharged heart to shed

tears, and although they came from him in agony, he let them hold their way without striving to repress them, and he knelt still by her side waiting for the return of Michael and Leowulf, with Godfrey de Vienne—not that he entertained the slightest notion that the surgeon's skill would be of any avail.

On her calm, still features the cold rigid hand of death was too plainly stamped to doubt that her spirit had gone to the place from which care and sorrow are ever kept, even though there was a smile upon her features, and her scarce closed eyes made her look as though she was just waking from some very happy dream. He had not the heart to move, he was quite down, so oppressed that he could not change his position, even though he might have wished it. While remaining thus, with his eyes covered by his hands, he felt a hand placed lightly upon his shoulder; he looked up instantly, and found it was John Chandos.

"How now, Wat?" he exclaimed; "what piece of work has happened that should make ye bow your gallant head thus low, and the tears stand thickly in your eyes? Come! never look so wonderingly upon me—my presence here is soon explained. I had nothing to do in Flanders, and I heard you were doing wonders in Hennebon. I obtained permission, took ship, and made the best of my way there, but finding you were come in this direction, I followed. Here I am, and, as fate wills it, yours is the first face I meet with. But pardon my abruptness, you are in sorrow—whose fall do you lament? Holy Virgin!" he exclaimed, as he stooped over and gazed upon Rubacelle's face, "the little gentle page! Mother of God! how did this distressful matter occur?"

A few brief words from Wat, who rose to his feet, explained all, and John Chandos, with a face of sorrow, again perused the features, and then turning to Wat, he said, in a voice of some emotion—

"How strong, even in death, does this poor youth resemble his fair relative, Rubacelle! Holy Rood; had it been that gentle girl, how my heart would have been crushed."

"And yet, John Chandos, she must die too," said Wat, suddenly, making up his mind to undeceive him with regard to the supposed page's identity.

"It is true," replied John, "and so must you and I, but let us hope it will be long, very long first, at least before she does. It is the destruction of creatures so young and beautiful as her that makes me think death can be horrible; it is hard that this little tender boy of thine should be cut off so early, and had he been mine, and as gentle and quiet to me as to you, I should weep his loss as you do; but had it been Rubacelle herself, God knows how I should bear it."

"What if it were Rubacelle herself?" said Wat, gently.

"What!" cried John Chandos, almost in a voice of thunder.

"It is useless to have further disguise with you, John Chandos," exclaimed Wat, earnestly, "and now there exists no motive for concealment, I will undeceive you—the resemblance you saw in that sweet one and Rubacelle was not imaginary, for there lies Rubacelle herself—"

"Rubacelle!" iterated John Chandos, looking as if stunned by a thunderbolt.

"Even her," replied Wat, scarce able to speak from his full heart. "The spirit of that gentle, most affectionate, guileless maiden, has fled to heaven."

"Holy Mother of God!" cried John Chandos, striking his breast with his fist, as though to stay the violent beating of his heart; "support me for a short while—let me bear this anguish as though I knew it not! Tell me," he added, turning with knitted brows and fierce eyes upon Wat, "how came she here in this garb?—ever by thy side, following thee at every turn, like a spaniel dog? how came she to thus equip herself in unmaidenly garb, and be thy menial? Speak! tell me in a word! no hesitation! no base equivocation, but speak at once!"

"John Chandos," exclaimed Wat, throwing up his head proudly, even haughtily, and returning the glare from John Chandos' flashing eyes with a steady unquailing look; "I understand neither your rudeness of speech, nor your violence of gesture: when you couch your questions with courtesy I will answer them."

"By Heaven you shall now!" roared John Chandos, "or I'll make thee at the sword's point. Speak!"

"Thou!" cried Wat, in a tone as loud as his own; then pausing and dropping it, he added, firmly, "it is not in thy power, not if thou wert an army in thyself, to make me utter a word unless it were my pleasure to do so. If John Chandos ever saw me quail before the fiercest foes, he might seek by intimidation to make me answer his rudely coined queries, but as he never had such fortune he must seek some other mode of prevailing."

"Wat Tyler! you have acted like a villain!" shouted John Chandos.

"A villain?" repeated Wat, picking up his sword, which lay by the side of Rubacelle.

"Aye," cried John Chandos; "I repeat it, a villain: you know I loved that maiden better than my heart's blood—would have given all I have in the world gladly to have made her mine; you knew this, and yet when I told you I loved her, and asked you to bear a message, you promised me to do so, but scandalously, and beggar of all faithfulness, took advantage of the opportunity to speak for yourself to work upon her simple mind, and induce her to forego honour, everything, to be your leman."

"You speak falsely?" thundered Wat.

"Do you tell me I lie?" cried John Chandos, drawing his sword with a sudden bound, and placing himself in the attitude of attack.

"Aye, a million times over," exclaimed Wat passionately: "if you persist in your unmanly aspersions of my honour, I say to your teeth you lie foully and basely, and will repeat it before the world an' thou dost not retract thy words, calling one of the purest of God's creatures a leman. Nay, never stand with your weapon bared, I am not to be cowed by a flashing sword, although it is borne by *Sir* John Chandos, knight, and I be but a poor squire."

"Draw your weapon!" cried John Chandos almost frantically; "let me not hasten thee by scourging thee with the flat side of my blade. Draw, and answer your vile shameless deceit with your life."

"I will never cross a weapon on this spot for hostile purpose while that gentle one lies there—the breath almost yet warm in her lips."

"You want the courage!" roared John, almost madly.

"Your blind passion makes you utter speeches which your love of truth at any other time would make thee blush to do," exclaimed Wat coolly, having mastered the passion which John Chandos' taunts had created. "I want not the courage to meet thee wert thou twice John Chandos, or to seize thee by the throat, and hurl thee from these ramparts to the place beneath, an' I felt the inclination—but while she lies there, her lifeless form shall not be desecrated by a brawl. However, I will not disappoint thee; for mark thee, John Chandos, you shall retract the base appellation which you coupled with her name, ere I condescend to give

the smallest explanation you may require; and if thou'lt meet me at day-break by yon field by the grove of trees, I will be punctual, and you, who have been at my side in so many fights, shall see whether I fear to meet the renowned Sir John Chandos."

John Chandos lowered the point of his sword, and turned haughtily away; he walked a few paces and then turned again, and saw that Wat was bending over Rubacelle in a sad and mournful manner, as though he was unaffected by their recent quarrel; he hesitated a few minutes—he saw Wat press his hand hard to his brow, and on the impulse he turned back, reached the side of Wat, and said hastily—

"Wat Tyler, my grief at Rubacelle's death has made me act like a mad fool; forgive me, and tell me how all this has come to pass?"

"You called the maiden my leman," said Wat, coldly, turning from him.

"I retract it, recall it—recall anything that could cast a shadow of taint on her. Oh God! I loved her so very dearly that I would have perished ere have had an evil thought of her. Tell me, Wat, all you can; I believe you were true to me, that she loved you, and not me: only tell me how I find her here in this garb?"

Wat was quite appeased by John Chandos' apology, and would have been, had it been less, for he could see that all his anger sprung from the strong agony of soul he felt in discovering her he loved with his whole heart in such a habit and bereft of life. "It was her sad fate to fix her heart upon me," he replied, sadly. "My heart was given to another; I told her so; I pleaded thy cause with her, so help me Heaven!"

"I believe it," said John Chandos; "I was worse than mad to doubt you."

"But she was not to be persuaded," continued Wat, "and being without a friend in the world—for Katrine took the veil, upon the death of Bullfric—she appeared before me, previous to my journey to England, in her present garb, and begged me to take her. I could not resist her tears and sorrowful words, or forget her lonely situation, and I consented. From that time she has been with me, and as I stand here before God, whose hand might strike me lifeless at a thought—whose tribunal I must appear before one day, she was as my sister to me, pure and undefiled; in all her acts, her thoughts, her attentions, the very gentlest, sweetest, patient being in existence; and she is dead, John Chandos, struck down through her over anxiety for me, and I would have given my right arm to have saved her from this mortal blow."

"Thy right arm?" cried John Chandos, with strong excitement; "I would have thrown my life away to have saved her from an ache, would have died joyously had my breast received the arrow instead of her. Rubacelle, dear Rubacelle, oh, that you should have died thus, and I not by to save you! I would give all I possess in the world to catch the knave who discharged the arrow."

"And I, readily," said Wat, "but that is a vain hope; it was one of a shower that fell as we reached the ramparts, and though I remember hearing a shriek, yet I little thought whose was the cry, or all thought of glory would have vanished before her danger. I flew to her as soon as I was aware of her situation, and it made the hot tears gush from me to see how calmly and resignedly she bore her lot—so patiently, no murmurs on her lips, but the same sweet temper to the last."

"She was not dead when you reached her side?" asked John Chandos, earnestly.

"No," replied Wat; "she died in my arms. She was sensible to the last, and almost her last words were for thee."

"For me!" exclaimed John Chandos, eagerly.

"Aye; she bade me tell you, that in the hour of death you were not forgotten, nor was your kindness; but she bade you forget her."

"Not while I have hope or memory left," exclaimed John Chandos, enthusiastically.

"With her dying breath she blessed you, and would have you forget her, that you might not bear in your heart a canker, as she would have said she had; but fearing that I should feel hurt to hear it, she checked herself, and did not conclude the sentence—kind and considerate still, even in death."

"May Almighty God bless and receive her! may she have in heaven all the happiness denied to her on earth!" burst forth John Chandos, the tears rushing in torrents from his eyes; he dashed them away with his hand, but they poured forth still, and then he said, "It's of no use, I can't help it. You may think me weak and womanly, but tears will force their way—I can't stop them. There lies all my hopes of happiness, blasted," he continued, pointing to the prostrate body of the ill-fated maiden, "utterly, hopelessly. Even in my most desponding moments, I had still some latent hope that she would change her mind, and in my brighter ones I conjured up fair visions of glory, of renown, of deeds of chivalry which should fill the world with my fame, and move her heart to regard me with the same affection I did her, and to reward all my toils and exertion with her fair hand, which to me was worth all honour, glory, riches, fame, all put together; and there she lies dead; oh, God! dead, dead! gone for ever—torn from me, never, never to return; no hope that my brightest deeds, my best fortune will ever win her favour for me. Oh, God! what evil crime have I committed that I should be punished thus?"

He tossed his arms wildly to and fro, then buried his face in his hands, and his body worked convulsively as if he experienced the greatest possible agony.

"John Chandos," said Wat, laying his hand gently upon his shoulder—his own heart swelling almost to bursting—"bear this visitation like a man: come, look up. Could her gentle spirit hover over you, and see you indulge in this grief, it would be pained and hurt. Nay, look up; she has died while young, and beautiful, it is true, but perhaps it is to spare her much misery, and for what we know it may be for the best."

"For the best!" cried John Chandos, raising his head and speaking bitterly: "for the best! can it be for the best that the young and beautiful should perish thus? Why were they sent here, if they were to be cut off in the morning of their existence, in the freshness of their youth, in the spring of their innocence, their goodness, their loveliness? Tell me not it is for the best; an' such is the doctrine, it were better the good and beautiful never came at all."

"We were born to die," said Wat, in a tone that implied he had a doubt of his holding such a doctrine in very high estimation.

"Aye," said John Chandos, with bitterness, "but not thus; the hand that plucks a budding lily, an opening blossom, and casts it carelessly away, is that of a rude and wanton destroyer; for had not the violence of the spoiler been upon it, that lily would, by nature's laws, have blossomed—the blossom come to perfection, fulfilled its term, faded, and died away gradually. I am not much of a reasoner, very little of a philosopher, but look ye there, Wat," he said, pointing to Rubacelle: "there lies a lily destroyed—there is a blossom—and never nature held one more lovely—plucked and dead ere it had a gleam of

sunshine, for happiness is to human beings what sunshine is to budding things; and can you tell me that so sweet and gentle a thing—a being so very lovely—was sent here only to wear a blighted heart, and be struck down as a green sapling by a thunderbolt?"

"The dispensations of Providence are unfathomable by us," exclaimed Wat. "In all the fiats of the Almighty there is a motive; and, doubtless, the motive for removing her from the earth was one which would be productive of eternal joy and felicity to her."

"If I could think so—if I could but fix upon my heart such a conviction," said John Chandos, earnestly, "I could bear this visitation more calmly; but I have a doubt—such a doubt as priests call sinful to hold; but I have it, and I cannot divest myself of it. There is but one thing which will give me a little resignation."

"And that?" said Wat, inquiringly.

"Is, that what has happened is irrevocable, unalterable," he replied; "no act or deed, no art or power I possess can change it—the blow is struck, the blight has fallen, and death is there unchangeable. Would that I could, by pouring out my heart's blood, restore her to life, make her rise up from the earth as young, as fresh, as spotless as she was ere that deadly shaft was sped; would that I—but it is in vain, and I am but a fool to indulge thus in impossible wishes. She is gone; she, the green flower of my heart, the star of my hope, the light that gave honour and glory their lustre; she is gone, and I have done with all—with life—with the world—with all that men live for—for ever—for ever."

"The death of one so beloved is terrible," said Wat; "but even under such anguish there is consolation to be found, if it is only in the assurance that she is removed from all care, and pain, and sorrow; and it would be a selfish weakness in repining at your bitter loss if you were to destroy what only God gave you, and what He only has a right to take away."

"Why look ye, Wat," said John Chandos, "my heart and spirit feels as it never felt before—not even when the gentle being there denied me all hope, utterly, that she would bestow her love or hand upon me. It was bad enough then, Heaven knows, but this is a crushing sorrow far beyond it—may you never feel as now I feel! Still I am not weak enough, because all desire of life hath left me, to myself destroy it, though 'tis now so valueless; no, I will still breathe on, until the sword of an adversary cuts me down, until I lie on the cold earth as now she lies, but the hope of fame and glory has departed entirely. I feel isolated and alone in the wide world, and care not how soon I have done with it; but mark me, I will still fight as I have fought—still be where danger presses thickest—still endeavour to achieve feats such as few men have ever accomplished, but it shall be for her memory who lies there; she shall not be wronged by having the love of one whose deeds would not have shed lustre on her. I will wave my bright sword as of old, shout forth my war cry in the old tone, and win laurels to hang upon her tomb; and when I die, Wat, when my spirit leaves this frame of clay, and, as I hope, will wing its way to the fields of eternal bliss, where hers now is, it shall be on the battle plain in the midst of glory, and with her name on my lips as the last sound I shall utter, God assoilzie my soul!"

As he concluded his speech, uttered with intense fervour, the bright tears standing thickly like glittering diamonds in his eyes, Michael and Leowulf arrived, almost dragging Geoffrey de Vienne between them. In an instant they brought him to the body, and he said coolly—

"You have hurried me hither at a frightful pace, and fatigued me beyond description for nothing; the patient is dead, and instead of a boy is a woman."

"Don't say she's dead," said Michael, almost fiercely; "don't say that."

"Of what use would it be to me to tell a lie? I repeat she is dead," he replied, in the same cool tone of voice.

"Can you not restore her?" exclaimed Michael, hating to believe she could be dead.

"That is a power past the art of surgery," replied Geoffrey; "if we could reanimate the dead, dying would be a farce—it would be a rare world for villains."

"But extract the arrow and try; she may be only in a swoon from loss of blood," persisted Michael, and on the instant knelt down and partly raised her body on his knees.

"Holy Mother! if it should be so," exclaimed John Chandos eagerly; "try, Geoffrey de Vienne, try what thy skill can accomplish, and name thy reward; if wealth can purchase it, it shall be thine."

"I tell thee, Sir John Chandos, any effort I might make would be quite useless," returned the surgeon; "she is gone past all recovery, and had you have removed the arrow, instead of speaking her last thoughts and wishes, which I have no doubt she did—"

"She did," said Wat.

"I believe you; but instead of doing so, such a rush of blood would have followed the removal of the shaft, that she must have expired without uttering a word; my remaining here, therefore, seeing she is dead, is useless—my services are in great requisition just now. I wish I could have saved the maiden for you, but such cannot be, gentlemen. Good den." He waved his hand, and was about to depart, when Wat begged him to extricate the arrow before he left, which he did, and then went his way.

John Chandos took the shaft and examined it closely.

"It is of French make," he said, "and I will wear this beneath my hauberk, as an incitement to revenge, on the heads of all of that nation, the death of my best beloved. Woe, woe, to those who come beneath my arm, when that arrow presses on my heart, and my brain is aching with the memory of her fate!"

They now prepared to remove her; they gathered several pikes and fastened them together in the shape of a litter, and then laid her gently upon it; she was carried to a large mansion close at hand, which the original possessors, in fright of the conquerors, had quitted, and was then borne into an extensive sleeping apartment; she was laid carefully upon a couch, and Wat Tyler said he would hasten to Sir Walter Manny—inform him of what had taken place, and then proceed to make preparations for her interment. John Chandos expressed his determination to watch by the body, and Wat, accompanied by Michael and Leowulf, quitted the room. Our hero was the last who went out of the apartment; as he quitted it, he turned his head, and saw John Chandos fall on his knees by the bedside, and fling his head, with his hands embedded in his hair, in a passionate torrent of grief and anguish, upon the bed by the side of her who lay cold and motionless, but smiling sweetly and kindly as though her death-wound had been a gift of happiness.

Wat had an interview with Sir Walter Manny, and related to him all that had occurred, giving him a warm relation of all Rubacelle's attentions and unremitting kindness to him with such eloquence, that Sir Walter turned away to brush the tear that had gathered in his eyelid, when he heard that she had perished.

Wat then referred to the paper, which, with her last breath, she had told him she had placed with Sir Walter Manny, and the knight replied—

"I have it safely—it is a deed of gift, investing you with the whole of her wealth. She gave it into my possession at Ghent, after you were released from the vaults, in which the villany of Bullfric had confined you. Poor girl! dead! Heaven rest her soul!"

"Amen!" responded Wat, earnestly.

"Her disguise never deceived me," said Sir Walter; "I knew that the page was Rubacelle, and, I believe, placed her appearance in that garb to its right cause. I knew you were possessed of the most honourable feelings, and would not wrong the trustfulness which the devotedness of a young girl made her place in you: I said nothing, nor took heed of what it would have been a cruelty to prevent. Well, Wat, she shall be borne to her grave as becomes one so pure, so affectionate, and so beautiful; for, save Violet, I never saw one so lovely, and I can only wish that the ceremony was for another purpose than to hide her for ever from our eyes. Did she name any particular spot where she wished to be buried?"

"A spot where the grass would grow over her, green fields around her, and the blue vault of heaven shed its clear light unimpeded over her."

"Her wish shall be gratified; a little way from hence is a valley, so very lovely in its situation, that many a weary heart would die without a sigh to be laid in that fair place. There shall be her grave, and if her sweet spirit could gain a happier repose in being laid in a beautiful spot, her's will sleep there blissfully."

"It is a vain attempt to find words to express my thankfulness," replied Wat, with a huskiness of throat, through his emotion; "but you know how her faithful devotion to me must have won my affection. Were you in my situation, you would feel as I feel, and know how high the estimation is with which I regard your kindness, and beg of you in that fashion to understand what my heart would say, but what I find my tongue inadequate to utter."

Sir Walter shook his hand, but made no reply, and Wat then left his presence and snatched a brief repose of a few hours. With the dawn of day he was up again, and returned to the house in which Rubacelle was lying, and met John Chandos, whose features were more calm than when last they had parted. He had remained by the maiden's side all night, without stirring, as he said, acting as though she was in a quiet sleep, and not suffering himself to breathe too loud for fear of disturbing her, and he prayed for the repose of her soul as the long night passed slowly away, and almost fancied he beheld her spirit in a blaze of light hovering over him, and returning the blessing he was praying to be showered upon her.

The kindness of Sir Walter procured a number of females, who came early and prepared the body of the departed maiden for its last abode; a bier was made, and the next morning, ere the sun was half way to the meridian, the procession was moving which was bearing her to the grave. The first shock of battle over, the inhabitants of the town had all returned to their respective homes, and it soon got bruited among them that a young and lovely maiden was to be buried, who had, out of love to an English squire, followed him as a page, and had received her death-wound on the ramparts of their town. Some said she had thrown herself before him, and received the shaft aimed at his breast; others that she was shot ere he could advance to her assistance. Many averred that he knew not his page was a fair girl, who had loved him and followed him, until he tore open her dress to stanch the blood from the wound; all agreed that she was lovely, very much to be pitied, that he was broken-hearted at the discovery, and at her loss. All the young men who heard it were sad, and wished it had not been; and the young maidens wept, and wished they had both been married happily, instead of parted in this sorrowful way. All of them came to follow her to the grave, and though she was a stranger to all, in a strange land, her sad fate had touched the chord of human sympathy, and there were few who did not feel sorrowful, and follow her with moist eyes and heavy hearts to her last home.

The procession quitted Vannes by eight in the morning—a bright, fresh morning, which seemed compounded all of sunshine, fresh air, and blue sky. There had been some heavy rain in the night, and everything looked green and fresh, and glad—but the procession. First came a small troop of Sir Walter's followers, two abreast, with reversed arms; then a party of drummers, with muffled drums, beating the solemn roll, which tells the by-standers death is following in their footsteps; then came a cluster of young maidens, clothed in white, sprinkling the way with flowers, and many were the hands which with glittering tearful eyes were stretched forth to help them in their sweet task, and strew flowers the freshest and most beautiful they could gather in the path; then came a little child, walking alone, clothed all in white, with a very sweet face, and long fair shining hair—she held in her little hands a heart carved from alabaster, on the top of which was a crown of thorns—and this little child was intended as an emblem of the innocence, the purity, and beauty of the dead maiden who was following slowly behind her; she was succeeded by an old priest with long white hair and beard which reached nearly to his girdle; he was attended by two others, younger than himself, and six boys bearing censers, scattering the odour of frankincense around; then came a party of young men, bearing boughs of myrtle, as a token of the love for which she had died; and then came the body, covered with a white pall, a large crucifix upon the breast, and a wreath of white roses placed by her head. The pall was decorated with bows of violet-coloured silk, and was strewed with white and pale-red roses; it was borne by six stout troopers, and, as it passed on its slow solemn way, there was not a dry eye among those who stood looking upon her who was never more to be seen by mortal eye. Close behind the bier followed Wat Tyler and John Chandos, side by side, and many speculations were made as to which was the sufferer by the death of the young and beautiful maiden; but from their faces nothing could be gathered—they were both pale as marble, and their eyes looked red, but there was no tear, and their teeth seemed set with a strong resolve, that let their agony be what it might, it should not be seen. Sir Walter Manny and Sir Robert d'Artois next followed, then Michael, Leowulf, and Mark Grayling. The latter seemed as deeply affected as any one there: his head was bowed low, and a strong quiver would run through his frame ever and anon, as raising his eye it would catch sight of the pall-covered body before him. Who shall say there was not on his heart a strong memory of by-gone griefs, which the present scene had brought up before him with terrible force! A troop of the Countess of Montfort's people came next, and then came the Countess herself, who having heard the story and wept over it, resolved to follow the devoted girl to her grave. She was attired in a dress of violet, and was mounted upon a white palfrey. In her arms she carried her little son, clothed in white—a branch of laurel and

myrtle twined he held in his small hands. She was attended by a number of her ladies, and a portion of Sir Robert d'Artois' men closed the procession, but there were crowds of the young of both sexes following bareheaded, and offering up to heaven prayers for her soul's welfare.

The procession moved on slowly and solemnly to the place chosen for the resting-place of the gentle girl: it reached it in an hour after it had quitted Vannes. The spot was, as Sir Walter had characterised it, a valley, whose situation was very lovely: it was small, but one wild luxuriance of grass and wild flowers; young green trees were growing around—the beech, the acacia, and the sycamore; it was surrounded by heights where vines clustered, flowers grew, and all the green things which make nature so beautiful were in profusion. It was a very sweet place, and such an one as might be happily chosen to be the burial-place of one so young and fair as she who was about to be laid there. The grave was made, and the body was lowered into it; and then the old priest repeated the prayers over it in a manner so impressive, simple, and unaffected, that the maidens around sobbed aloud, and the young men bent their eyes, swimming in tears, to the ground. Wat Tyler grew paler still, and stood motionless as a rock, looking more like a marble statue than one endowed with life. Poor John Chandos was heart-broken; he had tried to bear up bravely—had tried to keep down the agony which seemed as if it would break his heart in twain; but when the solemn service for the dead was delivered, his stern resolution left him by degrees—he squeezed his hands together as if he would crush them to powder, his chest heaved and fell, and his whole frame seemed convulsed. The old priest, when he had repeated nearly all the prayers, said,—

"And in a lonely place God planted a lily, which was very fair, very gentle, very tender, but companionless, save a green vine that grew near; and to that vine it clung, smiling 'neath its shadow, cherished and fostered by the same sunshine, rearing its sweet head to the same skies, and being happy that in all its loneliness it had this one vine to cling to. It was grateful for its protection, it was humble and patient, and with all its graceful beauty was modest and lowly, so that the vine could not but be affected by its gentleness, and give it its sympathy, as it gave its shelter and companionship, raising it as it rose, strengthening it with its aid, and making the meek thing look on the beautiful face of nature with a glad heart. And so they grew together in harmony and calm joyousness; but God saw fit to send a storm, powerful and fierce, which passed the stout oak, the strong elm—even the vine rose up again before it—but it seized the delicate lily, it bowed its gentle head low, it destroyed it, swept it away utterly, and when the storm had ceased, that fair lily was dead—"

John Chandos groaned audibly, in bitter anguish of spirit.

"It was the will of God," continued the priest, "the will which no mortal can dispute—which no man may repine at, and not sin. The fragile flower was dead, and the vine was left alone, and he found that the companionship of that simple flower had made the lonely place seem bright, and fair, and pleasant; and now that it was taken away it was cheerless and desolate, and it drooped and felt how the simplest things may win our hearts by gentleness, and in its soul it wished that the storm had laid it low with the little flower, for its spirit was grieved and very sad, and it felt that all sunshine, all freshness, all delight, was gone, and that it should never be glad again—never. But one morning, in the sickness of its deep sorrow, a gentle voice came in the bosom of a soft wind, and it sounded like the voice of the lily that was gone to return no more, and it said, 'Weep not for me, thou kind heart! the spirit that gave me life hath taken it, and though my presence is lost to thee here, it will once again be thine when thy time shall come to leave this lone place. Gentle heart! grieve not for me, for I bloom in a garden which hath no shade of gloom, where the softest winds and the fairest skies make the bliss unalloyed; there shall we meet again. So, until that hour shall come, do thou smile and look as happy as of old, when we grew together.' And with a blessing the voice ceased, and the vine felt its heart strengthened, and bowing to the decrees of the Immutable, it raised its head once more, and looked around with its old freshness until the time should come to pass when it should once more be side by side with that gentle lily.

"My children," he added, in a quivering voice, "there lies the lily, cast down by the will of the Almighty, and the vine stands drooping by her grave; let us hope and pray, that the spirit of the gentle one who hath perished will hover over him, and whisper to his soul the soft language of consolation, as the tender lily did to its more hardy companion. Let us offer up to the All-beneficent our earnest prayers for the calm resignation of the stricken heart, and pray that a voice may come to it in its solitude which shall chase away its sorrow, which shall revive its languishing spirit, which shall invest it with an uncomplaining patience, and impress it with the calm joy of a sweet hope of reunion in the realms where grief and ruth hath no abiding place."

Then, while sobs from the young maidens around were breaking the solemn stillness that reigned, he raised his hands upwards, and his long white hair, as it streamed in the wind, and his venerable aspect, made him seem like one of the prophets of old.

"Oh God!" he said, in tones that thrilled the hearts of his hearers, "Thou who art all wise and good, and striketh not the smallest flower of the field, or the bird of the air, but it is for a wise and kind purpose—who hath in thy wisdom laid this young and innocent maiden low, so that she may never more glad the hearts of those who loved her on earth—receive her into thy regions of eternal bliss, where felicity is deathless, and stretch forth thine hand to raise up and strengthen the heart of him who is left alone to mourn that he shall never more in this world of trial and sorrow have her gentle companionship; so infuse thy spirit in his mind that his heart may grow still, and quiet, and patient, and he may not prostrate himself bare-headed to the earth, and cry in the keen misery—the bitter anguish of broken-heartedness, I am lone—alone."

And then the old man knelt down to pray further, and all the assembled multitude did so likewise; and it was very affecting to see the young and old, the beautiful and the stern, bowed low with bare heads and clasped hands, praying for the gentle girl in her early grave.

The prayers were finished, and many of the young and fair could scarce see for weeping; and there were stern souls, who knew little of tears but what they had seen in weak women, whose eyes were dim and moist, and whose throats ached with emotion. And when the old priest had concluded, and turned slowly away to return to the town, and men prepared to cast the earth into the grave, the weeping maidens thronged round that last narrow dwelling of feeble mortality,

and threw all their flowers over the body, quite hiding it in buds and blossoms, and green leaves, the very freshest and fairest; and then they gave place to men, who covered the flowers with mould, and soon filled up the narrow space which contained the gentle, ill-fated Rubacelle—and the heart of John Chandos.

A small mound was raised over the grave, and was speedily covered with fresh turfs of green grass, and many fair maidens, innocent and guileless, whose hearts were as goodly as their sweet forms, vowed that they would plant it with the rarest and choicest flowers, and make that simple grave the sweetest spot in all that lovely vale.

And then they all left it slowly and sadly, and reached the town with hearts which seemed as though light mirth and careless gaiety could never reach them more.

Wat Tyler—sad, and with a sensation of loneliness he found terrible to bear, which he strove hard to shake off, but in vain—did his best to console John Chandos, though he had little heart to do it; but John Chandos, always impetuous and enthusiastic, was as vehement in his grief as in all other things; he would not be consoled, and wandered away from everybody to wrestle with his grief alone.

And thus ended the brief career of the simple Rubacelle—a maiden whose heart was purer and richer than the finest gold that ever passed through the fire, and had not a taint of dross remaining—whose form and face was of nature's fairest workmanship, and whose nature was quiet, simple, and guileless. Her manner was all gentleness. Reared in a lonely house, by a lone heart, she saw no wrong, and scarce knew what it meant, for her native inclinings were pure and spotless; her heart teemed with affection, and her whole heart was given to Wat Tyler. It was a first and passionate love, yet without the fire that makes passion so near sin; and it was her last, and would have been had she lived a thousand years. Of the world she knew nothing—of human nature as little, because she had seen but little; and she judged of most beings by herself.

Her first disappointment—her discovery that her love could not be returned—crushed her heart as a heavy foot would a delicate flower. It was true, after the first agony had passed away, it rose again, but not as it had been; it was bruised and hurt irrecoverably; but she "had set her life upon a cast, and she would stand the hazard of the die;" and not seeing that to be ever in the presence of him she loved could be deemed by society an error, or could prove a wrong to the maiden he loved, for she thought no ill, and intended none, she resolved to share her fate with him, to be to him—what she was, to act—as she did; it would be impossible for words to tell all the worship of a heart so very bright and estimable as hers in any other way.

Her share of happiness was small, and it was a saving of much sorrow and care for her gentle heart that she perished so early, ere her spring had reached the first dawn of its summer. But though her life was full of the sad aching of hopelessness, her hour of death was one of much happiness, for she saw that her worship, her devotion, her never-drooping affection had not been thrown away upon a soil which could yield only one flower; she saw that the kindness which he, who was all in all to her, had ever shown her, had come from his heart, and had not been the result of a desire only to prevent her being hurt by his indifference. His anguish, though it pained, yet gladdened her; she would have lived to have spared him the grief he exhibited, and yet gladly have died to have come to the knowledge that he loved her—if it was only as a brother, still that he loved her. And could she have known the tearful sympathy which was shown for her sad fate by those who had followed her to her grave, and her spirit have drawn gladness and delight from it, her repose would have been so very happy as to have repaid her the sorrow she had endured in life.

And in her dark and cold resting-place she lay, placid and calm as an infant in a quiet dream of heaven; and the flowers that were young and fresh upon her face—the heart-offerings of hands delicate, fair, and good—were not sweeter than the smile which in death played upon her lips; and her smooth unwrinkled brow showed her last sigh had been given when the heart was impressed with a knowledge that brought pleasure and chased away sorrow. The earth rested lightly on her—the green blades of the trailing grass waved freshly over her—the loveliest flowers, planted by gentle hands, grew healthily, and were more beautiful there than in any other spot, and twined gracefully round a small cross which Wat Tyler had placed at her head. And it was made a spot for the young and fair to visit; and o'er that small mound, kept lovely by tenderest care, many youthful hearts plighted troth, vowing by the dead maiden beneath, who had for love perished, to be true and constant to each other, and never change while life was in them. And it was made the star of the valley, the gem of the country round, the shrine of many a broken heart, and the pilgrimage of many a loving one.

And thus passed away Rubacelle. Her history, among young hearts, became a tale for sad hours—a memory for tears; and her early grave, the little mound of blossoms and buds, a spot hallowed by all who knew her fate—the old, the young, the fair, the delicate, and the beautiful.

Peace to her gentle heart!

CHAPTER IV.

"And in thy sight to die, what were it else,
But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?
Here I could breathe my soul into the air,
As mild and gentle as the cradle bade."

SHAKSPERE.

"Our Perdita is found.
* * * *
Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserved—where lived—
How found?

IBID.

"'A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any christom child; 'a parted even just between twelve and one, e'en at turning o' the tide; for I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends. I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and 'a babbled of green fields."

IBID.

THE sudden discovery by Editha of Ethelbert, wounded to death—for Alwena, when she sought her to gain her aid to pray by his side, had told her so—caused such a tremendous shock to her frame, that she swooned away, and with so much violence, that it was long ere they could restore her to life. The excitement of her sudden and unexpected appearance kept Ethelbert alive—it caused a reaction through his frame, and prevented him from sinking beneath the exhaustion which his immense loss of blood had occasioned; he watched most anxiously the efforts made for her recovery, and at last gave a groan of relief as she opened her eyes and stared wildly round.

"Was it a dream—a wild, fearful dream?" she muttered, as she turned her head shudderingly round; then she caught sight of Ethelbert, ghastly and bleeding on the couch; she gave a stifled shriek, and cried out, as she sprang forward, and fell on her knees before him, "Oh no—oh, heaven! it is true—it is too true! Oh, Ethelbert, Ethelbert, is it thus we meet after so many horrid years of misery!—now, indeed, my cup of sorrow is filled, and the frail hope I have so many weary years clung to is vanished and gone." As she concluded, she buried her face, in a passion of grief, on the bed.

"Look up, Editha, look up," exclaimed Ethelbert, his lip—stern as he had schooled his heart to be in all things—quivering with emotion. "I did not expect that we should meet thus, but Providence wills it so, and we must bow to the decree. Be calm and listen to me, dearest, for my time is short, and ere I pass away I would learn much from thy lips, as thou shalt from mine. Be firm, and dry the tears from thy eyelids, and twine thine arms around me once more, as thou didst when we were happy—as thou didst ere thou wert torn from me—there, now am I happy!" he continued with a smile, as Editha, striving hard to repress her bitter sobs, sat by his side, and supported his head upon her bosom; "now is all my sorrow and my toil repaid, and no child sunk more gently and happily to sleep on its mother's bosom, than I shall to my long home on thine, my sweet wife."

"Ethelbert! Ethelbert!" murmured Editha, as the scalding tears fell profusely from her eyes, "I did not dream in all my grief to have the agony of such an hour as this—I did not—" sobs choked her utterance, and she could not proceed further. The water stood in Ethelbert's eyes as he replied—

"My best beloved, restrain your bitter tears—they make my heart writhe with anguish: it is not to be that you and I, albeit who have loved each other so very dearly, should be happy together on earth. Let it pass, the Almighty would not have visited us with these heavy trials if we were not to meet in heaven. Cheer thee, then, and believe that though I pass away from thee now, never to see thee again on earth, we shall meet soon again in heaven. Be calm!"

"I cannot, I cannot," sobbed Editha; "my heart is broken."

"Dear Editha," said Ethelbert, gently, and somewhat feebly, "thy grief cannot restore me, and to see thee thus pains me. I entreat thee to be patient, and call upon thy strength of mind to support thee in this hour."

"I will try, but it is a bitter task. Oh, Ethelbert, my heart is so crushed by woe, I have no power to keep down the agony I endure," she exclaimed, in a voice of deep anguish. "I will try; but to see thee thus makes my brain on fire, and feel as though reason would desert me; but I will try to be calm. Heaven help me! I will try to be patient, though I sink beneath the effort," and by an extraordinary exertion, she repressed her tears and sobs, and sat motionless to hear his words.

"Editha!" he commenced, speaking faintly, "I have learned much of thy history from one who was the principal in tearing thee from beneath my roof—one William Ogle, a villain in the pay of Sir John Maltravers; he has perished by a frightful death."

"Heaven is just," exclaimed Editha.

"Aye," cried Ethelbert, in a tone of exultation. "Editha, both thou and I art avenged; all who have done us wrong are before their Maker to answer for their crimes. I have been as a wolf, Editha; my nature quiet, and full of gentle thoughts for my fellow creatures, became as sanguinary as a wolf's when thou wert torn from me; but now that I have wrought the destruction of those who blasted all our hopes of happiness, the old feeling of gentleness is upon me; and had it been my lot to have survived for years, the yearning for blood which I felt on me as a thirst, would never have revisited me. Tell me, Editha, and I know you will, as I lay here on my death bed, answer me without swerving a shade from the truth—was it through the villany of Sir John Maltravers you were torn away from our happy home?"

"It was," she replied.

"And you never at any previous time, by word, or thought, or look, gave him the slightest hope or reason to believe that such a proceeding would not be a deed of horror to you?"

"Never, as I hope for mercy, Ethelbert. While with the Lady Maltravers, ere we were wedded, he proffered infamous proposals, swearing he was madly in love with me; but I treated him with the greatest scorn, and vowed I would relate his villany to the Lady Maltravers if he repeated it. He did repeat it, and I should have instantly told her, but he went, like an abject wretch as he was, upon his knees, and begged me to refrain, and swore a fearful oath never to renew his suit while I remained in the Castle; and the fear of disclosure made him keep his oath. After I was wedded to you, dear Ethelbert, and we were living so very happily together, he came like a demon to blight our joy, and again renewed his insulting proposals, still taking terrible oaths that he loved no one as he did me. I answered with the bitterest contempt, with every word of contumely and disdain I could employ; he left in a frightful rage, and I told you, but you smiled and heeded it not, and treated it as a jest; and then a short time afterwards, the monster, William Ogle, with some villains, burst into the cottage while you were absent, and in spite of shrieks, of frenzied screams for mercy, for help, they tore me away. I was blindfolded and carried to Berkeley Castle, and there confined in a remote and unfrequented wing of the castle. Oh, Ethelbert, if you could but know all that I endured while there, all the base entreaties to make me vile, the knavish artifices, the cruelties, you would have pitied and pardoned me for the worst that could have befallen me."

"But their villany did not prevail?" said Ethelbert, with intense anxiety.

"No," replied Editha. "Four long years I remained in that lonely place; I bore a dagger, and swore a most fearful oath to Sir John that if he dared to lay a finger of outrage upon me I would stab myself to the heart. He knew I should keep my word, and for a short time he refrained from his solicitations. One day I tried the door of my prison—by some strange oversight it was left unfastened. I hastened through the passages leading from it, my heart beating to suffocation with the hopes of escape. I gained the entrance unobserved, and as I was about to dart into the court-yard, I encountered Sir John and Lady Maltravers. The sweet lady greeted me kindly and warmly, but Sir John whispered rapidly—'A word from you to betray me, destroys Ethelbert's life!' I knew his power, and fear for you kept me silent. And then, when the Lady Maltravers begged of me to remain with her, he sought an opportunity to speak to me alone, and told me he had surrounded you with spies in his pay, and the moment I disappeared from the castle they would fall upon and slay you. I could not doubt the truth of what he said, for my horror and hatred of him was so great,

that I could readily have attributed any crime to him, however monstrous. At length he tried to deceive me with an account of your death, but I had already found a friend in a simple dependant, who convinced me that you were living—"

"His name was Ulph?" said Ethelbe .

"It was," returned Editha; "you know him?"

"I do," he replied; "did he do you service?"

"I found him the most faithful, trustworthy creature, of any I met with, after quitting you, until I came here," she exclaimed fervently.

"I am glad to hear it. It was from him, as well as Ogle, that I learned much of your history; he told me of your dwelling-place near Troll Hill, and we were now on our way to search for you. He is here with me."

"His honesty will be rewarded in a way he does not expect: a maiden to whom he was betrothed at Berkeley Castle, understanding that he had fled no one knew whither, having ascertained before he went where he had found us a resting-place, quitted the Castle and sought us out. She is still with me."

"It was reported she was dead of grief, through the loss of Ulph, who was carried off by William Ogle, to prevent his disclosing to any one his knowledge concerning thee. He brought a child to me from you, Editha; let me know everything concerning that child, for much of my anguish has been caused by my suspicions concerning it."

"Your suspicions of that child, Ethelbert? for Heaven's sake! what is your meaning?" cried Editha, agitatedly.

"Look you, dear Editha," replied he, "I know the purity of your mind and inclinings to be such that I would have staked the redemption of my soul upon your truth; but, alas! my bitter pilgrimage through life, since adverse fate parted us, has too fatally taught me what brute villany may accomplish, not to have, in opposition to my most earnest hopes, a sad doubt that one so persecuted, so vilely wronged, as you have been, should have escaped without taint."

Ethelbert felt the strong shudder which ran through Editha's frame as his words lighted on her ear, and waited with a sickening sensation of an anticipation that his fears had been realised during her silence for a minute after his question; with a very painful struggle she succeeded in conquering her emotion, and then said in a low tone of anguish—

"You must indeed have suffered deeply, dear Ethelbert, to have had clinging to your soul a thought so agonizing; but let your doubts pass away effectually, for had so frightful a sorrow happened, I should not now be on earth—no, 'mid all my perils and trials, and many of them were fraught with hopelessness, with despair, when to my frenzied mind all escape seemed impracticable, Heaven still was bountiful to me, and I return to thee now as uncontaminated as when I was torn away. So Heaven judge me as I speak the truth!"

"Oh, Editha! my beloved wife," exclaimed Ethelbert, with fervour, "thy words have relieved my breast from a load of horror which for years, that have been as ages, has crushed it beneath its weight: that one thought in all my motives of revenge urged me on—that one imagining gave strength to every blow I struck—made my heart stone to those who had wronged thee—made me inflexible—relentless; but now the last feeling of agony which seared my heart with its burning brand has vanished, and thy words are the balm which will make my last hours as peaceful and calm as though my heart had never known sorrow. My gentle love, thou who, when I was a youth, with the heart and imagination of an enthusiast, whose lightest feeling was tinctured with the pure romance of boyhood, wert to me the topmost pinnacle of my soul's ambition; and who, when thou didst know that the quiet and thoughtful boy who day after day gazed his heart away in looking on thy gentle face, in dwelling on thy nature's loveliness, did turn thy kind eyes upon him, and found that thou wert his worship, his adoration, with the gentleness of spirit, the richness of heart, that made thy excelling beauty so much lovelier—wert moved to regard him with feelings of affection, and yielding in thy sweet kindness to the earnest solicitations his passionate love made mere words too poor to utter, did give thy hand, thy heart, and all thy worth to him; and with thy sweet ministering did make his fireside for a few short months an elysium. Thinkest thou, who wert so much my soul's idol, that my heart was sinful enough to dream Heaven had not thy peer, that when thy abstraction made my home a waste, my paradise a barren rock, I could draw from hope itself one small anticipation of future contentment? No—all was blackness, all was despair; and when I learned into whose ruthless hands thou wert fallen, no smiling tree revelling in its spring and green freshness struck suddenly and shivered to atoms by lightning could have been more withered—more a wreck, than was my heart, until now; and now that I know the strong hand of villany hath been unable to taint thee, I die happily in thinking thou art still living, still pure, and tremendously revenged."

"Is there no hope that you may yet live, dear Ethelbert?" said Editha, the tears thronging to her eyes, and requiring all her strength of mind to keep them from rushing forth.

"None whatever," he replied, calmly; "I have seen death too often, dearest, not to know its signs and symptoms, and feel too surely the cold hand of him who never spares, when their hour has come, the young, the old, the stern, or gentle. But never heed it, Editha, there must have been a time when this hour would come, and let thy gentle heart imagine that years of felicity have passed between us, and in the calm resignation of a happy old age I am laying myself tranquilly down to die; for, believe me, thou beloved, that dying in thy arms thus, thy wrongs are all with tenfold interest repaid, I feel most happy. I should be happier, I confess, could I have lived and passed the remainder of the days nature would have granted me with thee; striving, as the days glided by, to make them as happy as when thou wert a sweet girl, and I a fond boy, with all the freshness of youthful feelings upon me; but this fate denies, and so let us part, dearest, as though we were separating but for a time—our separation will be so; and do thou, knowing that I am happy, that thou art avenged, look upon my death with calm eyes, and when I am gone be cheerful, never letting tears dim thine eyes, which much weeping hath now robbed of half their lustre; but be smiling still, and happy, until God shall whisper to thee that the hour of our reunion has arrived."

"Dear Ethelbert," said Editha, tears rushing down her cheeks, in spite of all effort to repress them, "do not esteem me unmindful of thy wishes, or weak, or indifferent to distressing thy feelings at this sad moment; but I cannot stay my tears, or say I am not unhappy to see thee thus, or promise to smile and be cheerful when thy spirit hath fled. I cannot do it—indeed, indeed, I cannot do it, though it is thy dying wish. Oh, Ethelbert, ask me not to be happy in knowing thou'rt gone for ever; in knowing that no time on earth will come when I can meet thee again. Ask me not, I do implore thee; for wert thou

to die with that wish upon thy lips, I should strive to do it, and be very miserable in making the effort. No, believe that I shall be happier in cherishing thy remembrance with tears, dwelling on thy memory with low sad thoughts, than I could be with any attempt to be cheerful or smiling. I will make no one sad by my sorrow, none pained by my grief, for I will hide my wretchedness from all, and being patient to the will of heaven, wait as gently as I may, until I am made glad by the arrival of death."

"Let it be as thou wilt, dear Editha," said Ethelbert, a change passing over his features, and his voice growing sensibly weaker; "still I would not have thee grieve; I know how much sorrow thou hast suffered, and would not have my death add one grain to it."

"Ethelbert!" exclaimed Editha, earnestly, "when I was the simple girl you spoke but now of—scarce fifteen summers on earth, when I first saw that thou didst love me—then wert thou to me the universe; I loved thee with my whole heart. Often would I retire to some secret place to think of thee—of thee alone, and in the overflowing of a full heart, weep—I know not why, but that those tears even were sweet and pleasant, I can now most strongly remember, and the bright sunny morning that saw me thy bride made me think almost that there was no paradise but on earth. I had no thought of which thou didst not share; no vision from which thy image was absent; and during the long, long years we have been parted, the remembrance of those hours, of that love, was strengthened, until it became almost a madness to revert to what I had lost through others' villany; and now, dear Ethelbert, that the sight of thee renews that memory so powerfully, my heart leaps at it, I am doomed to lose thee for ever on earth, and have thy wish in my ears that I should bear it smilingly."

"Thy words sound almost as a reproach," said Ethelbert, smiling faintly; "so if the effort to be without sorrow for what no grief can change pains thee, I will not press it further, but let it pass, hoping only that He who is now taking away the life he gave me, will, in His infinite goodness, strengthen thy mind to bear thy large meed of sorrow, and make our re-union certain. And now, dear Editha, I am growing feeble, and I feel that my hours to live are few—let Violet be sent for, that I may give the gentle child my dying blessing, and do thou unravel the mystery concerning her."

"Who is Violet?" enquired Editha, eagerly.

"The child you entrusted to my care," returned Ethelbert.

"She still lives?" said Editha, eagerly.

"She does, and is very lovely," replied Ethelbert.

"She is here with you?" exclaimed Editha.

"She is. Immediately after I received her from you, I placed her in the care of an old woman whom I knew, and upon whom I could place implicit dependence, who resided on the limits of Sir John's estate, until my brother Halbert was restored to reason, and then I placed her in his care, where she has remained until now."

"Did not he perish with a fever of the brain, caused by the death of Ghita?" cried Editha, with astonishment.

"No; for two years his mind was gone, and he himself was at the point of death, but great care and attention restored him. For the last fourteen years he has resided with the child at a village in Kent, named Brenchley, but having by accident come to the knowledge of your abiding place, he accompanied me to discover you, and is here now."

"Great heaven! thy ways are mysterious and unfathomable!" exclaimed Editha, with strong motion.

"I am growing faint and very cold," said Ethelbert, his whole frame shivering; "has Violet been sent for?"

"She has," replied Editha; "Alwena has gone to bring her here."

"Bid her haste—my sight is dimming, and my breath comes and goes with difficulty," murmured Ethelbert; he was silent for a moment, and then contiued—"There was a scroll appended to Violet's neck; what was the meaning of the words it contained?"

"You remember them?"

"Word for word; I can repeat them—you bade me cherish the infant as a charge from my Maker to me, and told me I should be rewarded by that I did most hope for. What meant you by that?"

"Dear Ethelbert, I know that you loved me most truly," said Editha, most earnestly; "I had received so many proofs of it, I could not be deceived in it, and when I wrote those words, I had strong hopes that I should one day, through the goodness of heaven, be restored to you. I believed that child would tend to lead to the discovery of your dwelling-place, and in the fulness of my love for you, assured that the greatest reward I could have on earth, would be to be re-united to you, I believed you did most hope for me to be restored to thee as pure as when we parted, and I had then sworn a most fearful oath, if the villain, Sir John Maltravers, had fulfilled his threats of outrage, not to have survived it one hour, or, if in my power, to have suffered death ere his touch had contaminated me."

"And that restoration was what I did most hope for on earth," said Ethelbert, feebly. "I have it, and am happy; you bade me," he continued, "seek not to know who the child was—how she came to me, or *why* she was entrusted to *me*. I do know how she came, for Ulph told me; but who she is, or why you entrusted her to me, I am still at a loss to conjecture."

At this moment, Violet entered the room, hastily attired, accompanied by Flora, and running up to him, knelt down by his side and burst into tears.

"My dear uncle," she exclaimed, "what miserable news is this; is it true thou'rt dangerously wounded? They tell me the worst will follow; it cannot be; tell me, it is not so—disprove their dreadful words."

"They have spoken truth, my gentle child," murmured Ethelbert; "I am wounded to death, and have but few minutes to live; nay, weep not so, for I am very happy—look up, Violet! You see here by my side, her for whom my heart so long had mourned, even my beloved Editha."

Violet turned her weeping eyes upon Editha, and beheld her lovely still, but the wreck of her former self; yet, though her eyes saw only an attenuated form, and a wan, pallid face, there were still the same sweet features, the same gentleness of expression that had made her, when younger, so idolized. Violet took her hand, kissed it, and wrung it hard, for she knew what anguish she must be suffering to be thus restored to Ethelbert, only to be immediately parted for ever; but she could not trust herself to say a word, and she bowed her head low to conceal the grief it brought her. Editha returned the pressure of her hand, and looked upon her with great earnestness and then said—

"My sweet girl, thy presence will make one heart here very glad."

"Whose?" asked Ethelbert, with a clear voice.

"Her mother's," she replied.

"My mother's?" ejaculated Violet, quickly; "Great heaven! is she here? for mercy's sake tell me."

"Who is her mother?" asked Ethelbert, with singular earnestness.

"My sister Ghita!" replied Editha; "the child was born seven months after Ghita was torn away from Halbert—she is their daughter."

"My child! my blessed child! my heart told me thou wert my child, even when first an infant thou wert smiling in my arms," cried Halbert, advancing swiftly towards her.

He had hitherto sat in one corner of the room with his head buried in his hands; and his heart was too full at his brother's nearness to death to speak to Editha, although he was as much surprised to meet her as Ethelbert himself. He had no power to say a word of welcome to her, for their meeting was at a moment so sad that scarce a word could be said without bringing distress with it, but when he suddenly found that Violet was his child—his own flesh and blood, his first born—when, without a hope that way, she had ever been the first in his heart, he could not remain still, and he rose and made towards her with open arms, and she, almost with a scream, threw herself into them, exclaiming—

"My father! my dear father!" and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Ghita is here, you tell me," said Ethelbert to Editha, tears of joy—things he had not known for years—rushing into his dim eyes at witnessing their joy at discovering their relation to each other—"is she not?"

"She is," replied Editha.

"Let me see her, ere I die," said Ethelbert; "let me, ere my sight is gone for ever, see my brother made happy once more."

"Alwena will bring her to us, and prepare her for this strange, but for her, happy discovery," exclaimed Editha."

Alwena hastened out of the room, and Editha continued—

"My dear sister Ghita, how glad-hearted will she be to find here two beings who are so very dear to her heart."

"Tell me," said Ethelbert to Editha, while his faint eyes turned upon Halbert, and saw the excessive agitation that was almost convulsing his frame, as he watched the doorway through which Alwena had disappeared—"tell me whether Halbert has more to crush his heart in the loss of Ghita than I had in thine."

"No! he has not," replied Editha.

Halbert, whose ears were quickened by the expectation of Ghita's appearance, heard the question and reply, gave an audible sigh of relief as she answered in the negative, and lent a most attentive ear to what followed.

"Her story is soon told," continued Editha; "I had been dragged from our home about two years and a half, when, as you will remember, Halbert came to see you at St. John's castle, where you were dragging on a weary and miserable life; during his absence, a man, closely muffled in a cloak, suddenly entered the cottage; Ghita was alone; he threw off his mantle, and discovered himself to be Sir John Maltravers' cousin, Sir Cuthbert du Bois—"

"Aye, I remember; a more unprincipled villain, a more ruthless ruffian, never existed," said Ethelbert. "I see now, it was his name that Sir John's son, Martin, assumed when he visited Brenchley. Proceed with thy story, dear Editha."

"He threw down a large bag of gold upon the table, and made the most infamous proposals in the coolest manner an iron heart could have dictated. She hurled his gold at his feet; she opened the door, and bade him, with contempt in her words, loathing in her aspect, depart; he swore fearfully, and vowed, if she resisted his wishes, he would carry her away, subject her to such horrors no human being ever suffered, and slaughter Halbert. Her only reply was to summon Fell, the swineherd, who happened to be near, and he came to her assistance. Saxon like, he had a true hatred to all of Norman origin; he was tall and very powerful—"

"I remember bold Fell," said Ethelbert; "he disappeared soon after Ghita was torn away, and was never heard of afterwards."

"He still lives and dwells in the village," replied Editha. "He heard Ghita's voice; he could tell by her bright eyes and flushed cheeks that she was angered; he knew the character of the scoundrel who stood before him, and was at no loss to guess she had sustained insult. Her short order to him to expel Sir Cuthbert du Bois was obeyed, by his seizing him by the neck, lifting him as though he had been an infant, and hurling him out of the cottage; the enraged Sir Cuthbert drew his sword, and rushed at him, but Fell wrested his weapon from him, and snapped it in pieces like a dried twig, and with words of scorn, which were replied to by curses, he drove him from the spot. In an hour he returned with six armed men; there was but one man near, and he was slain to prevent him giving an alarm; Ghita was seized, and in spite of her screams for help, was borne away."

"Aye," said Halbert, bitterly, "her screams were heard, but when assistance came, she was nowhere to be seen. The serving-man lay dead; the tables and chairs were thrown down; all the room was in disorder, to shew that violence and outrage had been perpetrated, but though instant pursuit was made, she was never discovered, and I went distracted with grief."

"She was discovered," replied Editha, "and that by the faithful Fell. He guessed what had been her fate, but he never mentioned to you what had transpired that morning, because he shrewdly surmised you would have made great outcry, and, instead of getting her back, would have been murdered, or had some further injury inflicted upon you, without the slightest chance of ever recovering Ghita; he, therefore, when he found that her loss affected your reason, quitted secretly, making the best of his way to Sir Cuthbert du Bois's castle, which was in a distant part of Gloucestershire, and entered into his service under an assumed name, and disguised so that none could know him. By the exercise of the greatest vigilance and perseverance, he discovered that Ghita was confined in the western wing of the castle. The death of Sir Cuthbert's father, in London, had compelled his presence there, immediately upon his arrival at the castle with Ghita, and important family changes detained him for a considerable period, during which time, Fell had been unceasing in his efforts to contrive Ghita's escape. He could not communicate his knowledge to you, Halbert, for you were unconscious of everything; he would not to Ethelbert, for he feared that it would reach Sir John's ears, and through him, Sir Cuthbert's, nullifying all his efforts for her release. He therefore communicated to no one what he had discovered, but still worked on, and succeeded in letting Ghita know that he was near her, and would strive his utmost to effect her escape.

"Time passed on, Sir Cuthbert still remained in London, and Violet was born, but when she was four

months old Sir Cuthbert returned—arrived the very evening that they had planned to escape. Fell had procured swift horses, and every precaution was taken to keep the child from harm; an hour would have seen them on their way, but the sudden appearance of the knight put a stop to it, for the throng of retainers that were about nearly the whole night would utterly prevent them moving without being seen; they therefore postponed their departure to a more fitting time, and soon they experienced the terrible necessity that not a moment was to be lost, for the cruel villain, Du Bois, upon seeing the child, swore that if she was still perverse and inflexible, he would dash out the child's brains before her eyes, and while it lay there, so monstrously wrong her as to make her invoke instant death as the greatest blessing Heaven could bestow upon her; he gave her one day to decide, and that same night Fell fixed for their departure. When all was arranged, he seized the man who had the care of the apartments in which she was confined, bound him, took his keys from him—although he had been his friend in all his interviews with Ghita—and led Ghita away. As they were quitting the corridor they encountered Sir Cuthbert, who was astounded at meeting them, but was just about to raise an alarm, when Fell sprang upon him, and sent the wretched man to his account for ever."

"No," said Ethelbert, "he recovered from that wound; for in my search for you, Editha, I visited his castle, but afterwards his deeds so excited the hatred of his people, that with one accord they rose and slew him."

"I am glad to hear that the soul of the faithful Fell was not stained by his death, villain as he was—"

"Were they further intercepted in their flight?" hastily interrupted Ethelbert.

"No; but while on their journey homeward, they learned that Halbert had died bereft of reason for her loss; they were at the time near the convent of Wickwar, and Ghita resolved there to remain. She did; and Fell, with her most earnest thanks, left her there, and came hither to the Forest of Dean, where he had relatives. She had been a few months there, when a reverend confessor who attended me in Berkeley Castle confessed her also, and, struck by the resemblance of our persons, our histories, and our names, communicated to each the fact of the other's contiguity; and at my earnest solicitations, accompanied by her strong wishes to the same effect, he brought her to see me, and with her the child. I learned from her her history, and, after a long consultation, we deemed it best that you should have the care of the child, and to avoid the consequence of a discovery to you, dear Ethelbert, I adopted the mysterious form I used in my letter; for, had you known the child to have been Ghita's, you would have sought her out, might have discovered me, and your certain death would have ensued your efforts to rescue me. Thus, you perceive, I had every motive to prevent your seeking her out, and Violet was entrusted to thee, because we knew thou wert all goodness—she was thy near kin, and we were sure that in thy hands she would be free from all harm."

"It is in vain to say we might have all been happier had'st thou have made us acquainted with thy prison house," said Halbert, "for it is all passed; and though so many years of sorrow have passed over our heads as to almost banish all thoughts of felicity, we might still have been happy had not this unexpected blow deprived us of my dear brother for ever."

"Halbert," exclaimed Ethelbert, in a faint voice, "my last moments would pass far less tranquilly if I thought my death were to invest ye all with so much grief. Let me not hear thee say that, because I shall have gone from among ye, thou wilt not be happy. I am resigned to my fate though I have but found this loved one of my heart only to part from her for ever on earth: and did I not bow myself to the will of Him who hath ordained it, my death-bed might be a scene of groans and tears which my situation would wring from me; but the perils of many years have made me look death calmly in the face; and, believe me, the thoughts that all around me could be cheerful when I am gone—could believe that I had quitted them on some short, pleasant journey, would make me lay my head upon my pillow as though I courted sweet and gentle slumber; and I feel that the green turf would grow fresher, and the earth lie lighter upon my bosom, if I could know that you wept not unavailing tears for him whose spirit had winged its flight to another world. Think kindly of me; cherish my memory as one who loved you all dearly, and would have died to have saved ye from wrong or avenged thee; but weep not one tear, for tears will but bring thee grief, will not restore me, or make my resting-place a happier spot."

The entrance of Alwena, followed by Ghita, terminated his speech; the latter was prepared for some strange discovery by Alwena, but having constantly believed that Halbert had died, she had no thought that it was for a meeting with him that she was to prepare herself, and, therefore, when she entered the room and gazed around with quick eyes, she saw Halbert standing there looking towards her, scarce less agitated than herself; she almost believed that she saw a spectre, and, unable to utter a word from astonishment as well as terror, she could with difficulty keep herself from fainting. Halbert did not suffer her to remain long in doubt, and as he folded her in his arms, he shed a flood of tears, overcome by the intensity of his feelings; when, in some little degree, he was able to command his words, he turned to Violet, and as she stood there trembling, with her eyes blinded by tears, he took her hand, and said to Ghita—

"My dearest Ghita, let me place in thy arms this beloved girl—she is thy daughter!"

"My child—my child!" repeated Ghita, as she strained Violet to her heart; "this sweet girl the little infant it seemed tearing the heart-strings from my soul to part with! Oh God! how hast thou shewn thy mercy to me! My beloved girl! my dear child! Oh, how many weary, weary hours have passed since I held thee to my heart thus, thou sweet one! Holy Mother! this one moment repays me all the years of misery I have suffered. My sweet child, who has preserved thee thus? who has been the faithful guardian, the generous benefactor and protector of thy infant years?"

"My ever, ever dear father," murmured Violet, "always the kindest parent to me, albeit he knew not then that I was so happy as to be his child; yet could not the fondest father ever have treated his dearest child with more unceasing affection than he did me, dear mother—mother! Oh! how sweet that word is to my heart, a word I have often wept to think I had none to utter it to—but now I have found one, and we will never part, dear mother—never—never!"

"Not till death divides us, my dear child. Oh, merciful heaven!" she exclaimed, as her eye suddenly lighted on Ethelbert, pale and ghastly upon the couch, supported in her weeping sister's arms, and fluctuating between life and death, "who is you sufferer?"

"Have my features so changed, Ghita, that you

recognise them not?" inquired Ethelbert, in a hollow voice, and with a ghastly smile.

"Holy Virgin support me! Ethelbert—can it be Ethelbert that I see thus?" she exclaimed, with extreme surprise.

"Even him," replied Ethelbert, and then raised his hand, as he saw she was about to make an exclamation of grief; "make no lamentation," he said, "I am very happy to see your reunion, and the pain of this wound will soon pass away. We might have met under brighter circumstances—it was my hope we should; but Heaven has ordered it otherwise, therefore, let us not complain. My dearest Editha, press me closer to your heart; there is a voice which says my hour is come, and there is a thick veil descending over my eyes; I am very faint, and I think I have not now a much longer time to be with ye. I have had great sorrow, brought by great wrong—I have revenged it; but I did not leave to God the punishment of those who injured me. There is blood, much blood, upon my hands and soul, and it may have been wrong in me to have obtained retribution by my own hands; but, God help me! I could not sit down under the burden of my heavy griefs, and not raise my arm to avenge them. So, ere I stand in the awful presence of Him to whom I must render up an account of my deeds, I would offer a prayer of earnest heart that He will not look with a stern eye on my acts, and would have you all kneel round me, and pray for my soul's welfare, ere I bid ye farewell for ever."

Even as the words left his lips did all who were in the room bend their knees upon the floor, and all was silent, for a time, as the grave, broken by nought save an occasional sob from each of the females, who had not the strength to look on the dying man and not weep. He, too, raised his weak hands and clasped them together, while his lips moved and his dim eyes turned upwards as though he prayed for mercy, with all the fervour his dying condition would permit him. The stillness continued for some time; at length his hands drooped, and then fell listlessly by his side. His head, before upraised, declined, until it rested on his breast; his weight became heavier to Editha, and she could hear plainly the heaving of his chest, as he caught his breath in short, quick pants. Suddenly, they were all startled by his springing half up, and his eyes, with an expression of wildness, seemed to fix upon some object, to follow it, as if it moved from right to left, and then from left to right; his lips moved quickly, as though muttering something angrily and bitterly; he clenched his hands, and the perspiration, as cold as ice, rolled down his brow. At length he said—

"What dost thou here, villain? darest thou to enter here?"

"Ethelbert! dear Ethelbert!" exclaimed Editha, with alarm depicted on her countenance, "there is no one here but friends. Whom see'st thou?"

"Look, Editha! see you not the serpent that stung us—that crushed our hearts? see you not *him?* There! look where he stands, but fear thou not, I am with thee now, and a power thrice tenfold his should not tear thee from me. Fear nothing, Editha, he has fallen once before me—he shall again."

"There is no one here, dearest Ethelbert, but those who love thee," ejaculated Editha, clasping her hands with anguish.

"See how the villain smiles in mockery and scorn!" interrupted Ethelbert, pointing to vacancy, and staring as though his eyeballs would start from their sockets; "his eyes glare on me, his face is the hue of marble, his lips are bloodless, and he looks like a dread spectre—but I heed it not, it is a vile artifice to cow me. Why, wretch! I have gazed on horrors which would make the stoutest hearts quail, and blanch their cheeks with fear, and wagged not an eyelid; and think'st thou—scorpion!—viper!—whose sight I loathe, thy presence would shake *me*, even though thou dost point to the red wound in thy breast, and thy face is hideously ghastly—thou hast yet to learn the nature of Ethelbert Evesham. I defy thee—I laugh thee to scorn—and did not these chains, with which thy malice has loaded me, bind me to this noisome dungeon, I would spring at thy throat, and never leave thee until I had twisted life from thy vile soul—never—never—never. Malicious fiend! dost thou taunt me thus? Thou liest, an' I were near thee, I'd cram it in thy throat as it came forth. Monster! thou didst not—I tell thee she was pure and spotless—thy villany, thy treachery, thy ruthlessness, tremendous as they were, could not subdue her; she was mine, is mine, and shall ever be. Monster! base remorseless villain! unhand her—take thy foul, blood-stained hands from her. Oh, God! that I could burst these chains! Wretch! was not the frightful murder of the wretched Edward sin enough for thy soul? Ha! does that make thee writhe? Editha, Editha, hurl him from thee—call on thy God for help. Oh, madness! oh, frenzy! will not these chains burst. Fiend! forbear thy malice—I will be thy slave; spare her—spare her—"

"Ethelbert, dearest Ethelbert, your eyes deceive you," cried Editha, weeping passionately, and with difficulty keeping her dying husband in the wildness of his delirium, struggling in a frenzied manner, from leaping upon the floor. "Ethelbert! hear me!" she cried, "you are mistaken, there is none here to wrong thee—hear me, dear Ethelbert, hear me!"

"I hear thee, my beloved, I hear thee," he cried, his voice being singularly clear during this wandering of his brain, "I do hear thee, but see'st thou not I am chained hand and foot. Take thy base hands from her, ruffian! Ha! see'st thou not that figure that rises so still and solemnly between thee and thy prey? Look! look!—see how slow and dreadful in aspect it comes from the earth; why does that mantle cover his face?—why is he so still?—why does he not unmask his features? Tremble, John Maltravers! tremble, fiend! you, who turned my happy homestead to a barren waste—see you not how terribly silent he rises before thee? Is there not a voice shrieks in thy ears—it is Edw— Ha! he lifts the mantle from his face, slow, slow, horribly slow—and why does he turn towards me, piece by piece, in that dreadful fashion? Does he think to cow *my* heart, to make *me* quiver with fear—ha! ha! ha! Have I not looked on a home blasted—a life withered, and smiled as I clenched my teeth—yet smiled, though death followed my smile? Does he think to make me fear? Do thy worst! I can look on thee, dreadful as thou art, and move not a nerve!"

"Ethelbert, my beloved husband, I am near thee. Dost thou not know me? it is thy wife, Editha, who speaks to thee; turn thine eyes upon me, dearest, gaze not there—hast thou forgotten me?" said Editha, weeping bitterly; but he appeared not to hear her, and still gazed in the same direction, with his teeth set firmly, his hands clenched, his brow bent sternly, and seated erect as though he needed no aid for his weak frame. He made no reply to Editha, but continued speaking, while all in the room, still on their knees, looked upon him with pain and alarm.

"Will that mantle never, never uncover his face?" he exclaimed; "but what is that to me so much as to him he stands before! I slew him not. God! it has

vanished like lightning, and his face is bare—I know it now. *He* here, and yet he perished—I know he perished; how white and wan his face is, and his dull eyes look dreadfully upon me. Why should they look so on me? I hunted him from his lair, but he fell not from my hand. See! he smiles, and points to my wound. Ha! dost thou think, because I am dying, to make my death-bed a scene of horror—it is a vain hope, Martin du Bois! Avaunt thee! with thy dripping dress, thy ashy features—avaunt thee! thine own crimes brought thee to thy death—*thou* hast no right to haunt *me*—I fear thee not, horrible as thou art—away—away! See! how he fades from before me, like a dim shadow into nothing—and there is nothing left—nothing—all is dark—dark—oh, God! how dark!"

He fell exhausted as he uttered the last words, and for a short time remained so insensible that at first it was thought he was dead; but a feeble pulse told them he had not yet passed the dread boundary, and they drew around him, watched him steadfastly, and waited silently until nature should again produce a reaction, ere she robbed him of breath for ever. His brow, when he fell back from his delirium, was stern and contracted, his teeth were locked together, his hands firmly closed, and his whole appearance betokened the existence of bitter feelings. But soon they saw that his features relaxed from their fierce expression, the wrinkles faded from his brow, and it became smooth and clear, and his lips unclosed, and his teeth parted, until a quiet smile played over his features; and then his hands unclasped gently, and he crossed them over his breast. A moment more and his eyes opened, and he looked upon the anxious faces around him with a mild and loving gaze; he spoke, but in that brief time the change in his voice was extraordinary—it was now faint and low, but clear from extreme hollowness.

"How sad and solemn are the looks with which you all regard me," he said, "and yet an' thou could'st remember the change I am undergoing, you should look on me with the bright looks of glad hearts who were watching me prepare for a high festival. See you not how happy and calm I am; and so should I be, for do I not pass away from earth with all the loved faces round me, not one absent I could wish to be present. Are not you twining your arms around me, Editha? is not my brother Halbert pressing my hand in his, made happy by the discovery of his beloved Ghita, and the knowledge that Violet, the child he has so long enshrined in his heart, should prove his own child—his own beloved daughter? and are not Violet and Ghita around me too, regarding me with eyes which affection for me makes sad? a feeling I would fain banish from them; but it shows me that I am not held lightly in their hearts. And is there not even the simple Flora, whose ingenuousness, whose affectionateness for Violet, whose faithfulness and truth have won my esteem; even she bends on me tearful eyes, telling me in language most eloquent that, stern and forbidding as I have been, she could not see me pass away without regret? Approach me, Flora, I would say a word or two to thee, ere my voice leaves me: let me assure thee that of all the faces upon which I shall look my last, thine will not be the least regarded, and in saying this to thee, I wish to shew thee the value of a true heart. I am dying, Flora; one short hour hence will see this weak frame of mine motionless, lifeless: and my spirit will have taken its way to stand before the tribunal where truth alone can be spoken—where the falsehoods uttered by us here appear fearfully against us. I would have thee, therefore, mark my last words; they will be words of truth, which should be written on thy heart so deeply that nothing can efface them.

"When first I looked upon thee, it was with the understanding that thou didst have in thy keeping a heart, which I had seen, if plain and simple, was in its honour, its integrity, its truth, of richest worth; and yet you held it lightly, treated it as though 'twere of little value, and seared it with a deep furrow, which time itself could scarce fill up. Nay, my sweet girl, do not bow your head so low, and weep so bitterly—I do not mean to wring your heart to reproach thee, because while a child thou hadst not the wisdom of years, but to shew thee the measureless value of truth. Thy error was of the head, not of the heart, and well have I proved it. My first impression of thee was, that thou wert light and vain; but ere I had been with thee very long, thy devotion to Violet, thy single-heartedness, thy utter abandonment of all selfishness where she was concerned, shewed me you had a heart most rich, though there was a killing ivy clinging round it, and hiding its beauty and its worth.

"I waited yet further, and saw that when thy cheeks were blanched with terror, when thou wert overcome by fright and apprehension—that thou wert sinking beneath it, thy heart forgot not its worship of Violet, still acknowledged its supremacy, and would have made thee perish cheerfully to have saved her from harm. Thy love, thy devotion for her was pure, unaffected, unostentatious; it convinced me thy heart was a prize, thy nature most kind and good, and it won my best praise, my highest estimation. I am sure Violet loves you most tenderly—that your sincerity has gained her warmest sympathy, and your truthfulness to her has obtained it. I will not say what might have happened had you always been aware of the value of sincerity; but this I will tell thee, that when the generous-hearted Michael returns, never let him suffer the pang of believing his worth is uncared for, his heart unprized, and yet feel that there is the love of no one on earth you so earnestly desire as his.

"I have seen him in situations where men's hearts speak out, and saw his glitter like a gem, speckless. You may be proud of it—I know in your heart you are; therefore never be guilty of the weakness—I will not say meanness—of desiring people to believe you esteem it not. Remember, truth is the rich jewel that ornaments our brightest deeds—the gem that makes our best achievements valuable; sincerity enriches our simplest acts, and makes the affection of our fellow beings, which we may gain, lasting and priceless.

"Think of what I have said, whenever a time arrives that you are about committing an act which your heart—it is a monitor that never fails you—whispers to you must be accomplished at the expense of truth and sincerity. Fail not to act up to its dictates, and the affections of those you most desire it from—the feeling which Violet bears towards you, and with which I, too, regard you—will cling to you inseparably."

"I will never forget thy words—never—never," sobbed Flora.

"Dry thy tears, my sweet girl," said Ethelbert, feebly, "I did not seek to wound thy feelings; but in letting you know where your heart was weakest, to say that to thee which should enable thee to strengthen it so that it might never more subject thee to an evil like the one which has brought thee so much grief. Farewell to thee for ever! thou hast my blessing, and most heartily do I wish it could bring thee all happi-

ness; but that is a gift only in the hands of God here and hereafter. When years are passing over thy head, you will sometimes think of the stern man who scarce ever vouchsafed thee a gentle word or soft look, before whom thou would'st grow silent when thy loquacity, teeming with hopes and fears, so impressed with life's spring time, that like a clear stream to the lips of a parched traveller, they fell on my heart and refreshed it, even when I was most sad. Let thy thoughts of him be as gentle as thy memory will let thee; think not his heart was so stern as his exterior, but that deep sorrow had made gloomy a disposition little children would have laughed joyously to have approached. Keep me kindly in your remembrance, and believe that I so esteem your artless nature, I shall feel very glad to know in my hour of death that I had thy kind thoughts, and that when I was remembered it was with a gentle prayer for the repose of my soul."

"I will always bear you in my memory as one revered," said Flora, in a weeping voice, "for so you always were by me. I saw that Violet loved you, and I knew then you ought to be loved, and so I loved you too, and never thought you stern, or harsh, or cold, but only very sorrowful and unhappy; and if I ceased talking when you were by, it was because I thought my inconsiderate speech might obtrude upon thy griefs, and never because I was afraid, or thought you repulsive. Indeed I speak the truth; I shall never forget thee, or to pray that heaven may receive thee, and make thee happy for ever and ever."

"Thy simple earnestness of speech is an eloquence which art cannot utter," replied Ethelbert, "and I do believe thee. I thank thee most sincerely, and pray God to bless thee! Give me thy hand, it is the last pressure it will receive from mine—it is one of sincerity: may you be as happy as it is in the power of mortal to be. Farewell! and may the Almighty guard and guide thee!"

"Amen!" ejaculated Violet, with great fervour.

Then the dying man released Flora's hand, and she threw herself in Violet's arms, and wept bitterly; he then turned to Halbert and Ghita, and said—his breath growing so short he was compelled to make frequent pauses—

"Dear Halbert and Ghita, I have but little to say to thee ere I shall become one for memory only. That you can and will be happier than you perhaps have ever been, I can well believe, and die tranquilly in thinking so. Thou knowest my heart is with thee, that there is not a wish for extreme happiness I would not form for ye, and with my last breath implore God to grant it thee. Thou art in all ways blest; each have the beloved of their soul restored to them, and have one of the very loveliest creatures in mind and in person that ever left our Maker's hands, even the sweet Violet, for an only child. I could not leave you under happier circumstances; I could not wish to quit you at a happier time. If I possessed any grief in dying now, there would be no consolation which would chase away my regret so great as this knowledge; and so God bless you, and never inflict one pang more on the heart of either. Our fates, Halbert, alike till now, are changing for the better for both; happiness has been denied to me on earth, and to thee until now, but I die with the conviction that you will have many years of felicity here, and be rewarded with an eternal life of joy hereafter. Thou tremblest, Halbert, and lookest pale, and thine eyelids quiver; why, see, I am calm and placid, and bear my fate without a sign of sorrow: bear our separation manfully, bravely, as I shall, who have in quitting ye all so much to lose, and would strive my utmost to die peaceably and collectedly, that I might not draw one sigh or tear more from you than could be avoided. Why, there—there, Halbert; turn not thy head away, but look upon me with a firm and dry eye, with the face of old when we were boys together, and walking lovingly, smiling in each other's eyes, as we roved in the green woods—"

"My weakness overpowers me, Ethelbert," exclaimed Halbert, agitatedly, "and I feel ashamed that you should see me weep, and look so dull, when I should cheer thy last moments; but I have not the power to check my tears, and am like a child, whose heart, bursting with sorrow, finds a ready vent for its grief through its eyes. But, my beloved brother, thou knowest my heart as I know thine, and were I to bear this trial firmly, nor shew a sign that grief devoured me, you would still know that thy death would pierce my heart with anguish, even though I were assured Heaven would be thy portion the moment thy spirit was released from earth. So bear with my weakness, and think not harshly of me, if, in taking my last farewell of thee, I should be so bowed down by my feeling as to distress thine; but I cannot part from thee for ever—for ever, and appear as though we parted to shortly meet again on earth."

And, covering his face with his hands, he fairly sobbed aloud. A silence followed his words for a few minutes, and Ethelbert's eyes were suffused by tears; he, however, mastered the weakness, and said—

"It was never intended that those who love each other dearly, should part for ever with cheerful hearts and smiling faces. Well, well, we can but strive to do so. We must part—no earthly power can prevent that—therefore let us endeavour to make it as free from pain and sorrow as we can. Beloved Violet," he continued, addressing her, "I have the memory of one strong upon me, and would not die without mentioning his name, and sending to him a few remembrances, uttered with my last breath—to him whose manliness, whose courage, and whose noble heart so much outran his years: you know to whom I allude—*you* must know, for in your heart there is not such another."

"You would speak of Wat," exclaimed Violet instantly, without exhibiting the false modesty which would have led many a maiden to have professed ignorance, although their heart told them at once who was intended.

"I would," he said; "of him whose mind knows no shade of dishonour—whose courage knows no taint—and whose honour is as unsullied as thine own. He is a noble youth, and were nobility of station carried by nobility of nature, he is worthy of an empire: would I could grasp his hand ere I departed, but it may not be, and I will not waste a thought upon it. When he returns to you, and he will if he lives—but if he lives, not until he has plucked fame and bright honour for thee—convey my last words to him: say to him, Violet, that I had a wish to have lived and heard his name echoed by the mouths of the wise and honourable with praise and high landings, but Heaven has said it shall not be, and I submit to its decrees. Tell him I honoured him for his valour, for his worthiness, and the high integrity of his soul; and his position in my estimation, for the noble manner in which he displayed his love for thee, was raised to the highest pinnacle, for he threw away all thought of self when he thought you loved another—would still, if his heart had broken in the effort, have done all in his power to have secured your happiness."

"I know he would—oh, well I know he would," murmured Violet, scarcely able to articulate her words.

"For your sake he quitted home, country, friends, even you," continued Ethelbert, his eye brightening as he spoke, "to win fame and honor, to risk life and your loss, that he might lay laurels at your feet, and render himself, in his own estimation, worthy of you, when, ere he quitted, he was worthy to mate with an empress; and, Violet, you may be proud of his heart, proud that you have inspired his love, and be prouder still, to be able to retain it until you part as we are now parting. I had a wish to see thee wedded; but I must not think thus, or I shall find it indeed a task of deep regret to quit the world; bear to him my blessing—say to him his high enthusiasm, his estimable qualities, were all appreciated to their fullest extent by me. Tell him though I lived not to know what he had achieved with his sword among the brave warriors with whom he has allied himself, I feel as certain as that I lie almost breathless here, that his name will one day shine proudly in England's annals. I breath my blessing on his spirit, upon his bright sword, and upon his name; may heaven's choicest gifts be upon him, honour on his name, and prosperity and happiness ever surround him; may you share his fame and his felicity, dear Violet; may he be to thee all heart can wish, and may ye live many years, and know no hour containing sorrow such as I have borne for years. Farewell! my sweet child, let me kiss thy forehead; the Holy Mother surround thee with her beneficence, cherish and foster thee until thou art called to heaven. Fare-thee-well—bless thee! bless thee! My sight is failing me, and I feel cold and chill.

"Editha, my dearest Editha, for thee I have reserved my last words, my last looks, my last sigh; in thy arms thus will I pass away—on thy bosom shall my head repose when my spirit leaves its tenement. Editha, beloved of my heart, so many years loved under happy auspices, so many years mourned with bitterest anguish, so long prayed for, so earnestly hoped for, and now met to be thus early parted from—what shall I say to thee, to thee, the star, the hope of my life; shall I tell thee that while we were separated until we met an hour since, no time passed that found you unremembered—for even when sunk in sleep thou wert present in my dreams; that in the moments of revenge thy form urged me on, in my sadness there was a voice like thine which whispered consolatory hopes; and that when my revenge was complete, I knew the hour was at hand for us to meet; shall I tell thee how earnestly I looked for it! how anxiously I anticipated it! Oh, Editha, in my gloomiest hours there was a moment of bright hope; in my saddest moods, when my heart was like a herbless waste, there was still a flower there. Through a vista of sorrowful years I could see thy form at the end waving me on, and my heart still would bound and leap, for it felt that happy time would be realized, and so it has been; and once again, my best beloved, I am at thy side, and there is a something on my heart which tells me that we should have lived happily and without alloy to our peace, had I not been thus fatally wounded; and I could find it in my heart to be full of bitter regret, to think that we must part for ever, Editha, on earth, and not know one glad hour in each other's presence—and I can tell by thy sobs, and thy deep sadness, thou loved! that the decree of Heaven is no less severe to thee than to me, and have little need to ask thee, when we were torn asunder, if I was not constantly in thy thoughts?"

"Oh, Ethelbert! ever, ever," exclaimed Editha, earnestly. "Oh! think what I suffered to know that I could have returned to thee, and yet was held back by the fear of causing thy death! Heaven alone knows how dreadfully I suffered that long heart-breaking period. Even when I sent Violet to thee thou can's't scarce guess the anguish I endured, that in writing to thee I dared not say one word which would let thee know where to find me. Think of thee! oh, Ethelbert, no day, nor night, nor hour passed I did not weary Heaven with prayers for you."

"My dearest Editha, I am assured thou speakest truth," murmured Ethelbert, sinking rapidly, and his voice growing weaker, so that it became difficult to catch his words; but his memory after that one observation, to which he never alluded, remained surprisingly tenacious, "and did not forget me, although thou hadst a noble soliciting thy love, and I thy husband was but his vassal; but thou wert ever good and pure, and had he been a king would have been as unregarded as Sir John Maltravers. There is one thing I would know; you may, perhaps, be enabled to clear up the mystery. Sir John had a female child, had he not?"

"He had," replied Editha; "it was born previous to my arrival at Berkeley Castle."

"It was abstracted about the same time you sent Violet to me?" said Ethelbert.

"No!" she returned, "not till some time afterwards; and when its loss was discovered, every effort was made to find it in vain, Lady Maltravers nearly lost her reason."

"Was it ever ascertained what became of the child, or who stole it?" said Ethelbert.

"Not by Sir John," replied Editha; "but when that dreadful William Ogle allured me from Berkeley Castle, for his own vile purposes, upon pretence of leading me to you, he drew from me the intense loathing, the scorn and hatred I felt towards Sir John Maltravers, and he then confessed, with a horrid laugh, that, in revenge for a blow which Sir John in a fit of rage had dealt him, he had stolen the babe while sleeping, slain it, and then tossed it into the fosse, crammed into a basket filled with stones."

"Monster! he has paid the forfeit of his crimes," uttered Ethelbert, "and in his own death experienced some of the horrors he had inflicted on others. Editha, bathe my lips with water, for my mouth grows parched; I burn like a living brand, and yet there are cold shudders run through me—let me have some water—some water."

Water was brought instantly, and he drank eagerly of it; his temples were bathed with it, and he appeared to revive for a few minutes, but then he relapsed and breathed with difficulty, and he twisted and writhed about as though his inability to breathe made him keep with difficulty from fainting; he gasped for breath, he turned his head from side to side uneasily, opened and shut his hands, and cold perspiration ran from every pore; then again he lay calm and still for a time; every eye was turned upon him, watching with the tenderest anxiety his every movement and feeling, almost surprised that with so dreadful a wound life remained in him so long. He had laid for a short time without moving or uttering a word, and then once more his lips moved, and they heard him say in a very low voice,—

"Sixteen long years have been passed in the woods and the fields, on the hill side, and on the plain. At night I lay down upon the fresh grass, and in the morning the first thing that greeted my eyes were the green forest things, the young flowers, and the clear skies; and see how sweetly they stretch out before me now. It is pleasant to lie thus and watch the flowers budding, the young trees waving gracefully as they put forth fresh leaves, as youth raises visions of the future, which fade away as they grow older,

even as the greenest leaves turn brown and fall when winter comes. How blue is the sky, how green the earth, and how bright and clear that stream looks as it winds among those beds of flowers! It is pleasant to die in such a spot as this, for I know that all around is from the hand of God, and are living growing things, and the air is fresh—unlike the close atmosphere of a chamber. It makes my heart glad to die upon the grass; it seems as though the flowers were singing a low dirge for me, and were weeping that I, who have been among them so many years, should leave them for ever; but they will bloom over me, and I shall look up from my grave and smile upon them, and never think that the narrow house in which I am laid, is cold, and dark, and chill; and so I will yield up my breath gladly and calmly, and never repine that I have left the world, in which for years I have never known one happy day—no, not one—not even among these sweet things. Ha! what means that deep solemn mist which rises up so gloomily—that ponderous dark cloud, looming up and threatening with its evil aspect this beautiful scene?—it grows darker and darker—how thickly and heavily it spreads over me, shutting out from my sight all that is young, fresh, and fair! See, those which are brightest fade first—they are dying away. It is night—the flowers and green things have vanished—it is night—a night which shall know no morrow."

He lay motionless for a while, and then heaving a deep sigh, he muttered—

"It was a dream!"

Then he opened his eyes, which the near approach of death had made almost sightless, and turning them upon Editha, said in a tone which was little else than a faint whisper—

"Beloved one, the moment has come!—there is an icy hand which crawls and creeps over my heart, congealing it and checking its beating, telling me in a language that I cannot misunderstand, there is but a thread of life between me and the mysteries of after life. Oh! my sweet love, thou hart, who hath borne the arrow for so long a period! would I could compress an age of bliss into every moment of the time thou wilt remain on earth—would that I could! There is not a power, dearest Editha, I have left remaining, I would not strain to the utmost to accomplish it for thee. I cannot remember how many years of constant sorrow and suffering have been thine, without feeling, in this last moment of my tristful existence, a deep pang of anguish; or, that, amid all that misery, thou hadst still a hope that a day would come which should repay you for all you had undergone—but now that hope is for ever denied thee. I cannot remember this, and not feel most bitterly that the decrees of Him who is All-wise, however kind their motive, teem with deep pain, with cause for bitter regret—that they do indeed, make this world a vale of tears. But, my gentle Editha, albeit so much sorrow hath chastened thee—though thou art doomed to pass a certain term upon earth without a prospect of aught that can cheer thee while here, let not your spirit be so cast down, so utterly bowed to the earth, that thou canst not, by the aid of those around thee, who will love and cherish thee, and strive to cheer thee, make a strong effort to forget all that has been, and is past, and hope only for the blissful portion which will be thine in the world to come. Thou wilt yet be happy—indeed thou wilt be very happy, even as the earth looks all sunshine and gladness, when the storm, and wind, and heavy rains have passed away, and leave it without a cloud as I would leave thy heart—I would—I would—" He was silent for a moment, and a large tear rolled down his cheek. Then he continued in a voice that had scarcely any sound, "Thy face is shut out from my eyes—death has blinded me—I breathe with difficulty, and my tongue refuses to articulate my words; put thy lips to mine, love, and receive my last sigh; aye, even thus," he added, as she pressed her lips, almost as cold as his own, to his. "Farewell, dearest love—we shall meet again—hark! there is a voice that tells us so—did ye not hear it? My latest, most earnest blessing is thine—I feel the pulsation of thy heart—I feel thy gentle lips upon my own—and—beloved, it is not—oh—it is not difficult to die—thus—thus—"

He ceased—there was no sigh—no sound of pain—no struggle of the limbs, and yet, with his last word, his spirit passed away.

His departure had been so gentle, so easy, that even Editha knew not until some moments after he was dead, that his soul had fled from the earth for ever; but when she perceived that it was so, she turned her head away and fell senseless to the ground. She was borne away to her room, and then Violet's efforts were unceasing, until she was restored to her senses; but when recollection returned, her grief was very heavy, and she refused all consolation, although Violet never for a moment left her, or suffered an opportunity to pass without striving to lead her mind from dwelling upon circumstances which had irremediably blighted her heart.

A grave was dug for Ethelbert in the Forest of Dean, in a spot which he had himself chosen, and he was borne to it by four miners. He was followed by all who were related to him, and by every member of the little village in whose cause he had received his death-wound, and his loss was mourned most sincerely by all there.

A small mound was raised over his grave, and a cross erected at the head; and to this spot would Editha repair night after night, to weep over his grave. She was very quiet in her sadness, and made but little show of the intense grief she suffered, keeping herself apart from everyone as much as was possible, and resisting, although in a very gentle manner, every attempt to prevent her dwelling upon her loss. It was in vain that Halbert and Ghita endeavoured to persuade her to return with them to Brenchley—that Violet with tears even, and upon her knees, besought her to quit the spot; she remained immoveable, although her denial was given so kindly that they could not think her obstinate or sullen. They could see, although she never complained, that the hope which sustained her through all her trials having now completely deserted her, her frame was unequal to bear the ravages of excessive sorrow, and they saw her day by day grow paler and thinner, until she became a shadow. Her strength, too, left her, but her ruth never; she never smiled but when they noted how pale, and thin, and weak she grew, and then she would clasp her hands together, and with brightened eyes turn her gaze to Heaven, and a smile would play upon her features, as though she still had one hope remaining, though those who knew her sad history believed she was without one feeling that could approach it in name and nature. It was rarely that she came among her friends, albeit they treated her so very tenderly, and regarded her with such anxious and affectionate looks. She knew as well as they did, she could not thus decline each day, each hour, and not die; she knew that as she grew more feeble, and her form more wasted, that it would end in death, and though it was the only thing that brought gladness to her, she saw that it brought sorrow to them, and so she kept from them, that she

might not see their tearful eyes, or hear their earnest words beseeching her to quit a spot from which she would never part with life. Day after day passed away, week after week, and though they expected she would shortly die, she still survived, and still visited the grave of him who had been her only tie on earth. It mattered not whether it was in the storm and wind, the rain or snow, or the calm clear moonlight, she still went there each night to pray over it for him whose body lay beneath; and a year elapsed, and still was she thus. Her decline was certain, but very gradual; and though the desire in Halbert, in Violet, and in Flora particularly, was so great to return to Brenchley, they sacrificed their wishes entirely, rather than leave her here alone to perish, even though she had most earnestly entreated them to never heed her, but return to their home, which there was so many reasons they should revisit; but as firm as she was in remaining there, so were they in refusing to leave, and thus nearly five long years crept away; and then Editha had become too feeble to quit her bed, and soon grew weaker and weaker, until she died.

Ere the breath passed from her weak frame, she had been for some time delirious, but as death grew near she became sensible, and took a kind farewell of all, and sunk into a sweet slumber, from which she awoke, unclosing her eyes gently, and turning them up to heaven, she clasped her hands fervently across her breast, and with a placid smile exclaimed,—

"Ethelbert! I am thine for ever!"

Then her eyelids fell, her hands dropped gently, she breathed a soft sigh, and then she was dead. She looked, as she lay upon her couch, covered with fresh flowers, as though but in a gentle slumber; the smile she had given as she died still remained upon her features, and they wore an expression of extreme happiness. Violet wondered not, as she gazed upon her dead face, which still retained much of the loveliness that had so richly adorned it in the freshness of her youth, at the terrible effects her loss had upon Ethelbert's nature, and wept to think one so very beautiful, so good and pure, should have passed a life of such continued sorrow.

She was laid in the same grave as Ethelbert, and it became a pride to the miners and smiths of the village to keep the grave laden with fresh flowers and green turf, to point it out to the youthful, and to the stranger, as the last abode of those whose memory was to be revered and treasured up affectionately.

CHAPTER V.

"The Lord Robert was much lamented in England, and when the king was informed of his death, he swore he would never rest until he had revenged it; he would go himself into Brittany, and reduce the country to such a situation, that it should not recover itself for forty years."—FROISSART.

"Thus was the town of Dinant in Brittany taken, sacked, and pillaged, and the governor, Sir Peter Porteboeuf, made prisoner."—*Ibid.*

"The king followed this counsel, and sent for those that were before Nantes, who came to the siege of Vannes."—*Ibid*

"He kiss'd hands the next day.
* * * *
Was laden with all kinds of gifts and honours.
* * * *
Here he embarked: and with a flowing sail
Went bounding for the island of the free.
* * * *
Stood to watch the skiffs
Which passed, or catch the first glimpse of the cliffs.
At length they rose like a white wall along
The blue sea's border." BYRON.

FOUR days after the burial of Rubacelle, Sir Walter Manny, Wat Tyler, Michael, Sir John Chandos, Leowulf, Mark Grayling, Sir Yves de Tresiquida, and a large body of troops, quitted Vannes, and accompanied the Countess of Montfort back to Hennebon, leaving Sir Robert d'Artois there; at the same time, the Earls of Salisbury, of Suffolk, and Pembroke quitted him, taking three thousand men with them, and departed to attack Lord Charles of Blois, in the city of Rennes, which he had quitted four days before their arrival. Sir Robert was thus left with comparatively a small number of troops; and the capture of Vannes exciting in the minds of the French great rage and mortification, and the conduct of Sir Hervé de Léon, who had made such futile attempts upon Hennebon, also arousing their bitter comments, he resolved to endeavor to re-capture Vannes; and accordingly making great exertions, he raised twelve thousand men, and advanced upon Sir Robert d'Artois, who had but a handful of men to withstand their attacks. Still he managed to hold out the town against the most tremendous assaults, and had as well to contend with the townspeople; but his English followers held out, nor budged not, though there was not the most remote possibility of being successful, until Sir Robert found that he could not withstand the swarms that attacked him; and then he gave orders to effect their retreat by a private postern, which would have been accomplished with scarce any loss, but the townspeople having opened the gates after the French had carried the barriers, they poured in so fast that the English had to fight their way from the postern, and lost many men in the conflict, for the odds were five to one against them: but when once clear out, the French did not follow them, being quite satisfied with the share they had already had of the fray. Sir Robert d'Artois was the last to leave, and received a severe wound as he quitted the postern. He was borne by his men to Hennebon, where he received every attention; but his wound baffling the skill of the surgeons, he was advised to return to London, which he did, and when there received no more succour than he had at Hennebon. His arrival in London was but brief, ere he died. He was buried

in St. Paul's, with the most magnificent military obsequies, by Edward's express command, "as if they had been for his cousin-german, the Earl of Derby." Edward was exceedingly attached to him, and felt the loss severely; he swore he would revenge it tremendously, and determined to raise an army, march into Brittany, and so waste and destroy it, that for forty years it should not regain its former state. He seldom resolved upon anything without at once proceeding to its accomplishment, and accordingly gathered a considerable army together, put to sea, and in little more than a month he disembarked his men at a fort near Vannes, and then advanced upon Vannes to besiege it. As soon as he got his men into order, they commenced the assault, but after a vigorous conflict that lasted about half the day, without gaining much advantage, he desisted from the assault, determining to commence a fresh attack in the morning.

The Countess of Montfort soon heard of his arrival, and, attended by Sir Walter Manny and the whole of his gallant followers, immediately left Hennebon, and paid her court to him at Vannes; and after remaining four days, she returned with her suite to her little town, but Sir Walter and his followers remained with Edward. The English monarch quickly found that Vannes was very strong, and likely to take some time in conquering, for the townspeople had acquainted the troops defending them with the manner in which it had been carried, and they took every precaution to let no similar stratagem be successful. Hearing also that the country around had suffered so much by incessant warfare that there was little provision for the men, and less forage for the horses, he resolved to march upon Rennes, which the Earl of Salisbury was besieging, and left Sir Walter Manny and some other nobles, five hundred men-at-arms, and six thousand archers, to proceed with the attack on the city during his absence. He soon reached Rennes; but hearing Lord Charles of Blois was, with a considerable army, at Nantes, he hastened thither, in order to give him battle; but Lord Charles remained shut up in the town, and resisted all Edward's attempts and invitations to come forth and fight.

Sir Walter Manny, in the meanwhile, with half the number of the foe in Vannes, was determined to make a good effort either to win the city, or further renown—perhaps both, and arranged a little stratagem, by which he hoped, at least, to make a diversion in their favor. The French had hitherto given him but little chance, as they remained fast in their citadel, and would not come out to fight, albeit they were much taunted, and his stratagem was to see whether he could not draw them out. He picked out a small troop of daring fellows, and accompanied by Wat and Michael, Sir John Chandos, Leowulf, the Earls of Arundel, Warwick, Baron Stafford, and several others, he marched deliberately up to the barriers, while the remainder of the troops appeared reposing quietly in their tents, but, in reality, under arms, and ready for instant service.

As soon as the Bretons and French perceived them approach, and saw that their comrades were not accompanying them, nor exhibited any indication of intending to do so, or in any way assist them, they at once thought the English advancing were guilty of a rashness little short of madness; and the Lord of Clisson and Sir Hérve de Léon, seeing they could attack these comers, backed at the rate of twenty to one, took courage, and resolved to have a bout with them. They descended, therefore, to the barriers, and awaited their arrival.

Sir Walter was overjoyed to see his stratagem have such prospects of success, and pushed on vigorously to the assault. The conflict became very fierce, and as much as Sir Walter was accustomed to witness the daring deeds of his followers, he was surprised to see the gallant stand they made against a number so vastly superior to their own. Indeed, so admirably did they perform their duty, that it became a matter of doubt whether he could not carry the town if he could by any means get the remainder of his men to support him. And so strongly did this take possession of his mind, that when he found himself and men getting entire possession of the barriers, he was about to despatch Wat Tyler to bring them up, but a sudden reinforcement of French and Bretons coming from the city, compelled him to abandon his intention, and proceed with his original plan. He ordered his men to retreat gradually, and they did, contesting every inch of ground, and, as he expected, they were eagerly pursued; still the slaughter and havoc his English followers committed was extraordinary.

The French themselves could not make out how a band, so much smaller than their own, should thus withstand them, cut them down almost in shoals, and retreat as slowly as if they were performing a funeral march, and would not, upon any consideration, suffer themselves to be cut to pieces or frightened away, however unequal the numbers opposed to them.

When they had retreated as far as Sir Walter had ordered them, they were joined by their brethren from the camp, who had appeared as though they purposed remaining inactive. They joined in twos and threes, straggling up apparently in unimportant quantities, until their number was reinforced to an equal amount with their foe. Then they retreated no farther, but made a stand—then advanced; and the Bretons and French discovering their majority to have vanished, immediately made the best of their way back to the barriers at a speed which excelled that of the retreating English as their numbers had previously done; it seemed as though "devil take the hindmost" was the word; and such was their eagerness to get into the town, and keep out their pursuers, that many of their own people were shut out, and among them the Lord of Clisson and Sir Hervé de Léon, who both roared out most lustily for admittance, which being denied to them owing to the proximity of the English, cried out as lustily for quarter, which, as they tendered their weapons in the readiest manner possible, was granted to them. They were made prisoners by Wat Tyler and Michael, and were carried to Sir Walter Manny's quarters. The English were drawn off and retired to their camps; and it was then discovered that the Baron Stafford, who had fought most gallantly, had, in his eagerness to follow up the foe, got carried into the town; and Sir Walter, as soon as he knew of it, determined to release him if it was possible to accomplish it, even if he had to give up his two prisoners in exchange.

Edward in the meantime quitted Nantes, and arrived at a town named Dinant, which was flanked by a river, and the only approach he could make to it was from the river; but the inhabitants had erected palisades to defend it, and whatever attempts he made he was subjected to a tremendous discharge of arrows, which did great damage; and early one morning, while he was considering what would be the best method of subduing it, Wat Tyler arrived with despatches from Sir Walter Manny, containing an account of the attack upon Vannes, and the capture of Olivier de Clisson and Sir Hervé de Léon. Edward received him very courteously, was pleased with the contents of the despatches, which, among other

things, contained a very handsome commendation of Wat's deeds, and an especial recommendation of him as the young gallant squire who, before the barriers at Cambray, had done so well as to receive a sword from him (Edward) for his prowess, adding, that he was very worthy of being endowed with a pair of spurs; and Edward thereupon resolved to take the first opportunity to make him a Knight. He bade him remain with him, and, much to Wat's gratification, detailed his situation before Dinant, led him out and showed him his position and then asked his advice;—for Edward was possessed of a liberal mind, that would not hesitate to take advice from the meanest, if he thought their advice would benefit his situation.

Wat looked at the palisades, at the approaches to them, and then said, with great modesty of mien, but with a firmness of tone which convinced Edward he did not speak lightly or boastingly, that with a number of men-at-arms and archers, he would carry those palisades by storm, effect an entrance into the town, and open the gates for Edward and the remainder of his troops.

"You promise well," said Edward, with a smile.

"Not more than I will perform, my gracious liege," replied Wat. "I will be content to forfeit all hopes of honor and fame—even forfeit my life gladly, if I fail."

"In what manner do you propose to accomplish your undertaking?" asked Edward.

"Fill a number of boats with your best archers," replied Wat; "row them down in front of the palisades, and make them keep up an incessant discharge of arrows, while the men-at-arms, furnished with axes, under cover of the archers, will speedily cut down the defences, and, my life on't, your Majesty, we will fight our way to the gates to let your Majesty and your brave troops into the town."

"It is a bold scheme," said the King, musingly, "and it likes me well. I hate the moderate councils of a set of half-frightened knaves—this suits me better. It will need a bold heart and stout arm—you have both. You shall have a hundred men-at-arms and five hundred archers, my preux squire; and if thou gain'st thy project, a pair of knight's spurs shall grace thy heels."

"And if I win them not, my gracious liege," cried Wat, enthusiastically, "I shall have need of others never more."

"Well and boldly said," exclaimed the King. "By my halidame, I do believe thou wilt carry the place, though we have ourself failed in our first attack."

"I will, or perish," said Wat, energetically.

The King smiled, and gave instant orders for the assembling of the troops, while Wat left his presence to prepare for the enterprise. He communicated his good fortune to Michael, who rubbed his hands in ectasy.

"By the Holy Mother! Wat," he cried, while water stood in his eyes from enthusiasm, "it will be no hard matter to knock down those palisades, and we will cut our way to the gates, if we do it alone and back to back. I wish tough Leowulf was with us; how he would chuckle and laugh, and flourish his bonny blade! But never mind, we will do it—we will do it."

"I have sworn to do it or perish," exclaimed Wat, firmly.

"Ay, Wat, we will do it or perish! even if I never see dear little Flora again," uttered Michael, with strong feeling, "and I do look forward to that as the brightest day in my calendar of life. We will do it for her sake and Violet's, and then hurrah for the spurs! You will be a knight then, Wat—ha! ha! ha! and Violet will be a lady—a lady, and without it signifying who her parents are—that is, when she is your wife. Ah! what a happy day that will be, Wat, won't it?—ah! how I long for it, for I mean to be married on the same day as you—ha! ha! ha!—and then Flora will be my wife—my dear little wife—ha! ha! ha!—and we shall be so very happy—ha! ha! ha!"

Michael's laugh was nearer a cry than he could have believed a laugh could approach. His feelings were of the keenest and finest order, and the tears sprung into his eyes as he uttered his speech, to show him that pure joy itself has the same glittering harbingers as sorrow.

Wat, who heard the rich tone of his voice, was at no loss to guess the emotion he experienced, and it raised in his breast a strong conviction which had many times before found its way there, that if ever there was a truly honest and sincere friend, a single-hearted, simple-minded being in the world, Michael was the one. He squeezed his hand hard, and trying to disguise his own feelings in a smile, he bade Michael follow him, and proceed to embark with the men-at-arms.

When they gained the river side, they perceived an enormous quantity of boats, in which a large number of men were embarking under the superintendence of Edward himself; and when the boats were ready, Edward marshalled his own men, and prepared to march to the gates which Wat had promised to open for him.

Many of the men who had formed the expedition were acquainted with Wat, had fought under him, and had seen him fight; and as one bold heart always appreciates another, he was highly esteemed by those daring men. He was known by the name of "Sir Walter Manny's dashing squire;" and there was no little pride in the reflection, that his own gallantry had carved for him this name with the rude and fearless men who constituted the troops. They were quite satisfied, and willing to undertake anything under him—and the field must have been a terrible one indeed that would have deterred them entering it with him at their head.

As they rowed down the river, the inhabitants lined the walls and houses, and as soon as they came within reach discharged arrows and stones at them; but the English archers, always famed for their surprising dexterity and accuracy of aim, fired so swift and truly, that the inhabitants and troops were glad to quit their windows and walls. The men-at-arms, under the protection of the archers, landed, and with their sharp axes soon cut themselves a passage through the palisades; but when they were through, they were suddenly assaulted with tremendous energy and vigor by the townspeople and troops, and with difficulty kept themselves from being driven back through the palisades to the boats; but Wat rallied them with voice and gesture which would have infused courage into a coward, and fought, backed by Michael, with a desperation that could not be resisted. His men, encouraged by his ardour, imitated his example, and though they were a mere handful, compared to those they attacked, they advanced step by step, following Wat, although it was, for many a brave fellow, to death.

Ever in the thick of the melée, he waved his bright sword, and shouted his war cry, and cut his way through every obstacle. He seemed to bear a charmed life, for no sword, nor axe, nor arrow touched him; and thirst of glory, for *her* dear sake, who to him was the bright angel that held the laurel that was to crown his brow, was on him, and wherever he went,

death stalked in his path. He seemed animated by a spirit that raised him above all around him, to have upon him the fabled northland fury which the Norse kings of old were said to have when in desperate fight, which enabled them to hew down every foe, however superior in force or height, and shielded them from all danger; and this was one of many superstitions rife at this period; and the success which attended every attack Wat made, induced those who were near him to believe he was invested with this power, and they bruited it one to another, so that they fell back as he approached, and were afraid to stand before him and meet with a bold front his sword, which flashed in the bright daylight, seemingly only to be steeped in gore. His followers hung upon his skirts—he was ever in advance—and followed up every advantage he obtained; they were stern, unflinching men, laborers in many a desperate field, and held death as cheaply as if life were of no value whatever; they followed where he led, and it was not in the power of the troop and townspeople, however obstinate their resistance, or greater their number, to prevent them making direct for the gates. When they gained them the struggle grew tremendous; the inhabitants were too well aware of the consequences of suffering them to be obtained, and made most strenuous efforts to cut their foes to pieces, or drive them back by the passage whence they came. Edward, without the gates, heard the clamor and uproar of the fight, and grew fretful, impatient to be among the combatants, but still he heard the crashing and din of fierce and furious conflict, and still ingress was denied to him; his men tried to force them, but they were very strong, and withstood every attack. Wat labored hard to gain them, but the Dinanters had formed round them nearly a hundred deep, and he was already growing fatigued with the terrific exertions he had made; he began to fear what the effect must be upon those who had not the stimulus—the animus which he had, to prove the victor, and in a fit of desperation he threw himself among those who were nearest the gates, presenting their pikes, whirling their battle-axes, and making every demonstration of defending them to the last extremity; he shouted and cheered his men on. Always he had an able and determined second in Michael, who, with prodigious strength and valour of the very highest quality, fought with a vigour and success second to none but Wat; his cheer, which always echoed Wat's, might be heard by the most distant man of the troop, rising high above the din and turmoil, and having the same stirring effect upon the men's souls as the shrill blast of the trumpet, and when Wat made his last energetic effort, which was either to bring him victory or death, Michael imitated him so closely that his example stirred on others behind to fresh deeds of bravery, and with a tremendous hurrah! the troop followed on, determined to gain their point or be cut down where they stood.

Their loud hurrah was heard by those who were waiting so anxiously without, was responded to, and the effect upon them was extraordinary; they knew that they had certain succour at hand, which they had but to open the gates to obtain, then their labors had ceased, and each man, beneath the eye of their gallant king, had won for himself a crown of laurel. Thus they fought with more ardour than ever, poured on like a torrent with an impetuosity that nothing could check; and their opponents, who, to do them justice, fought with most desperate valor, could not maintain their ground. They gave it up, foot by foot, it is true, but still they gave it up, and every inch they yielded was to the English a point nearer the gates—nearer their victory. Fu
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upon this tall fellow, hurled him from the gate,
cried out to Wat—

"Now, Wat, open the gate, you have the
to be first to lay hand on the bolt, my dearest
and brother; yours be the honour. I'll keep
fellow at bay—open it, Wat! Hurrah for
Flora! Hurrah for the knight's spurs, Wat!
rah for King Edward! come on, you tower,

He suffered the man to regain his feet
slaying him, as he might have done, and
menced fighting with him, while Wat drew
first massive bolt, and as his movement
without it received a loud hurrah! he felt
glow like fire as it fell upon his ears; he
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The Dinanters yielded step by step, until at last the success of Edward's troops became so manifest that they began to retreat rapidly, grew confused, retired in considerable disorder, which ended at last in throwing down their arms, and flying away at the top of their speed. All the horrors which attend the capture of a town ensued, and the shrieks and yells which filled the air were terrible, until, by the earnest solicitations of Wat to the king, they were stopped, but not before the town had been set on fire, and sacking and pillaging had taken place to a very great extent. Michael was fortunate enough to capture the Governor, Sir Peter Porteboeuf, and received from Edward a handsome acknowledgment, as well as the promise of a round sum as his share of the booty, which was very considerable, the town at the time being full of merchandise.

Edward suffered all the inhabitants—save those who were wealthy enough to pay a good ransom—to depart; and when the town was cleared of everything worth taking, he deserted it, not thinking it worth keeping, and departed to Vannes, before which Sir Walter and his followers still remained.

He had been but a short time there, devising future plans, when he received intelligence that his fleet, which lay in the port near Vannes, was attacked by Lord Lewis of Spain, with a large quantity of ships well manned. The gallant Spaniard, finding there were only a few mariners to guard them, thought it was an eligible investment for a little courage, speculating that it would return him a considerable per centage in the way of fame; because, in the accounts of his attack and destruction of the English fleet, it was not obliged to transpire that there was no nobody on board to oppose him. While he was performing this brilliant action, the few mariners left with the vessels fighting gallantly, and giving him more trouble to conquer than he could believe, it reached the ears of Edward, who immediately ordered Sir Walter Manny to take one body of men, and himself took the command of another, and hastened with all their speed to the port. The moment they appeared in sight, Lord Lewis believed he had done sufficient to astonish the weak nerves of the world, made off, with what Edward thought, indecorous haste; he, however, succeeded in capturing four vessels laden with provisions, whose crews happened to be on shore, and sinking three barges, which he surrounded with gallies, each one containing five times the number of the crews in the three barges put together. Edward would have made sail after them, but was advised not, for the time it would take to embark would give the enemy such a long start, that it would be a great doubt if they could be overtaken, and it was leaving so small a number before Vannes, that the inhabitants of that town might sally forth and, with ease, cut them to pieces. He was very loth to forego his wish, but at last suffered himself to be persuaded, and the fleet was divided into two—one division was sent to Brest and the other to Hennebon—to prevent any future damage accruing to them from another similar cowardly attack to that made by Lord Lewis of Spain.

Intelligence was now received by him that the Duke of Normandy was advancing against him with forty thousand men; and this news rather perplexed him, for his whole army did not reach anything like that number, and was in three divisions — one before Rennes, another besieging Nantes, and the third with him before Vannes. His first impulse was to break up the siege of Vannes and Rennes, and at once make for Nantes, upon which the Duke of Normandy was advancing, give him battle, defeat him—for he had no idea of being himself defeated—and then, by forced marches, return to Vannes and Rennes, ere the inhabitants had time to take advantage of his absence. He would not, however, trust to his own judgment alone, but summoned a council, at which the most conflicting advice was given. Some advised him to retire altogether until he could reinforce his army—but that he indignantly spurned. Others advised what he himself intended to pursue; Sir Walter Manny being one of the number, he always advocating fighing under any circumstances, however great the disparity. Edward was casting his eyes around the assembly, almost determined to adopt his first intention, when his eye lighted on Wat Tyler, who was standing near Sir Walter, being privileged to attend the council as one who had, by his achievements, earned almost a right to a voice in the councils of the field, which were not quite so exclusive as state councils of the present day. The King called him forward and exclaimed—

"What say'st thou, my gallant squire? I should like to hear thy opinion—thy council, backed by thy bright chivalry, did win for us the goodly town of Dinant, with its goodlier booty, and won a pair of spurs, which, claim when you may, we shall not forget to pay. What say'st thou in this matter?—speak up, and fear not to council boldly; we shall not hesitate to follow it, if it likes us."

"Your Majesty does me great honour," replied Wat, with a flushed brow, "and I cannot but feel very proud at your distinction; but with deference to your Majesty's judgment, I would rather decline giving my advice."

"Why?" exclaimed Edward impatiently.

"Because I am the junior here—the least honoured by birth, and title—and—and—"

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"Because, gracious liege, my advice would be different to any you have yet received, and would probably be deemed presumptuous in thus councilling differently to those who have older and wiser heads than I, your Majesty."

"Your true men are ever modest in their bearing, and humble where humility is a virtue," muttered the King; and then speaking aloud, he said, "My preux squire, you have given me the reason of all others which should make thee speak thy thoughts, instead of reserving them. Trust me, thy council will not be ill or invidiously received because it differs from others, and is not put forth by an older head—I will not say wiser. Speak without fear; if we do not adopt thy council, we shall nevertheless be glad to hear it—so speak without delay, and boldly."

"It seems to me, your Majesty," exclaimed Wat, modestly but firmly, a little nervous from having so many eyes bent on him, but reassured by a friendly squeeze of Sir Walter's hand, to encourage him—"that it would be throwing away the chance of conquering both Vannes and Rennes to break up the siege of each with the expectation of returning in sufficient time to renew your attacks upon them before they could have gained any advantage. It is impossible to foresee what may occur to delay you, and it would be unfortunate to lose them both after expending so much time, blood, and treasure upon them—"

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"Now, Wat, open the gate, you have the honour to be first to lay hand on the bolt, my dearest friend and brother; yours be the honour. I'll keep this fellow at bay—open it, Wat! Hurrah for Violet and Flora! Hurrah for the knight's spurs, Wat! Hurrah for King Edward! come on, you tower, hurrah!"

He suffered the man to regain his feet without slaying him, as he might have done, and then commenced fighting with him, while Wat drew back the first massive bolt, and as his movement was heard without it received a loud hurrah! he felt his heart glow like fire as it fell upon his ears; he was soon assisted by several of his followers, while their comrades kept the townspeople off; bolt after bolt was withdrawn, chains removed, and then the gates were flung widely open, and Edward was the first to enter. He encountered Wat the first person; he waved his sword, roared out a burst of delight, and then cried as he seized Wat's hand, and wrung it hard—

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The devoted townspeople were unable to withstand the torrent that now poured in upon them, and their most strenuous efforts to maintain their position were in vain, although their numbers were little inferior to those Edward brought into action; but the fresh troops were anxious to emulate the deeds of the gallant fellows who had made the breach into the town, and fought their way, in defiance of obstacles which would have daunted ordinary men, up to the gates, and made their foes give ground in every direction. Edward himself, knowing Wat Tyler must have done wonders to have accomplished his task, felt an ambition to do at least as well, and whirling his battle-axe, plunged into the heat of the fray, animating his men to perform the most daring feats; and fighting by his side, animated by his voice, and most

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"Proceed," said the King, with interest displayed in his countenance.

"The Duke of Normandy is probably aware that his force considerably exceeds your Majesty's; and as he has the reputation of being a brave warrior, he will be as anxious to meet your Majesty in the field, as your Majesty will him, and will therefore save you the trouble and disadvantage of advancing to meet him, by coming hither to give you battle. The troops that are before Nantes I would order to join you here, for against such enormous odds they would have no chance of maintaining their ground, and they will be of service here."

"Your council affects me strongly," said the King, musingly. "How say you, Sir Walter Manny?"

"I advocate it strenuously," replied Sir Walter. "I confess it did not me before, but it is so well judged, that I should by all means advise its adoption—in every way your Majesty will be the gainer. Your position here can be rendered so strong, that were the forty thousand men under the Duke's command eighty thousand, he could not defeat your Majesty and the gallant hearts who will support you to the death; but in case of the worst, you are close to your fleet, and so short a distance from Rennes, that it would be easy to send for the troops before it, if their aid was required."

"How say you, lords?" exclaimed the King, when Sir Walter concluded, with an air which seemed to tell them, "I shall adopt it, whatever you may say." "The council seems good, and the best that I have yet heard. Have any of you anything better to proffer, or any reason to give why we should not adopt it?"

But the lords quickly perceived that Edward had made up his mind to follow it, and that any opposition would be useless. They all, therefore, declared it was decidedly the best, and, in fact, the very course he ought to adopt. Again he paid Wat Tyler some handsome compliments; and in telling him that he should adopt his advice, having little doubt it would prove as successful as that at Dinant, he gave him permission to ask of him a boon, which he said, if in his power, he would grant, whatever it might be.

Wat had a boon to ask which Edward little anticipated!

Despatches were sent for the troops which were posted before Nantes, and they immediately vacated their position and joined the King at Vannes; the division which was besieging Rennes remained there, and Edward posted himelf in the most advantageous spot he could find, so as to still carry on his warfare with the town, and be prepared to receive the attack of the Duke of Normandy, and fortified his position at every point he thought weak or likely to sustain the heaviest assaults; and when every arrangement was completed he patiently awaited the attack.

The Duke of Normandy advanced to Nantes, where he rested, and was then about to proceed to Rennes; but, understanding that Vannes was in the most imminent danger, and that the King of England's army was considerably inferior to his own, he resolved, as Wat had anticipated, to march direct to him, and give him battle, and if possible, destroy his whole army at one blow.

The morning previous to the battle, Edward sent for Wat Tyler to his presence, and when he entered he found the king alone. His Majesty received him kindly, and said—

"I have been talking of thee, good squire, to thy patron, Sir Walter Manny; we have had a long converse respecting thee, and I have drawn from him thy whole history; I cannot but feel astonished that one sprung from so humble an origin as thou, should have made such rapid strides towards fame and fortune."

"I am entirely indebted to the kindness of Sir Walter Manny, my gracious liege, for every step I have made," said Wat, in reply.

"You are indebted to fortune in meeting with him," returned the King, "for a nobler, higher-spirited, brighter-soul'd, generous-hearted man, never lived."

"Never!" echoed Wat, with great enthusiasm.

"But to your Maker alone are you indebted for gifts which would grace the bravest knight in the world," exclaimed Edward, "and though of humble origin, I'll be sworn honest—"

"The brightest sword, never sullied by the breath of dishonour, is not more free from speck than the hearts of my parents," cried Wat fervently; "my father need never blush to look his God in the face; and my mother, my dear, dear mother, the most pure-minded, affectionate creature in the world."

"I can believe thee," said Edward, smiling at his enthusiasm, "and as some of the proudest nobles round my throne have sprung from families not less humble than thine, and perhaps not all so honest, I see nothing to prevent me dubbing thee a knight, and giving thee the power of ennobling thy family from henceforward."

Wat bowed very low, but made no reply, at which the King seemed rather surprised and a little disappointed.

"You surely have no hesitation in accepting my proffer?" he demanded; and then, as if a sudden thought struck him, he said, hastily, "I abjure every thought of wounding your pride; it is not our intention," he added, rather proudly—assuming the plural, which in addressing Wat familiarly he had dropped—"to present you with an empty honour; your share of the spoil of Dinant, added to what we can grant you from our own treasury, shall remove you from all fear of being unable to support your title with such state as shall put it out of the power of any of your own station to look upon you with a contumelious eye."

"Your Majesty overwhelms me with your munificence," exclaimed Wat, affected by Edward's generosity, "and through your great condescension and kindness I am emboldened to speak my wishes freely to you."

"Thou'rt in the right, good squire," said Edward; "speak freely—think of me more as thy friend, than as thy sovereign."

"It is now five years since I entered your Majesty's service," said Wat, "and with but one exception I have never since been in England; there are parents and friends there I wish to see as earnestly as I desire to live, and my boon is, my gracious liege, that you grant me, and a friend who is with me, leave to return—one who is dearer to my heart than if he were my own brother—and if we each desire to remain in England for the remainder of our lives, your Majesty will be gracious enough to grant us our discharge."

"Thy discharge!" echoed Edward, recoiling a pace or two with surprise. "What, quit my service entirely?"

"Even so, your Majesty," exclaimed Wat, dropping his eyes as he met the astonished gaze of the King.

"By my halidame! but that I know ye to possess a heart that fears nought, I should have deemed your request dictated by a dread to encounter the hazards of warfare," cried the King, still regarding Wat with looks of considerable astonishment. "I am at a loss to surmise what can have raised such a desire in you, and much fear that I cannot grant thy request."

"Your Majesty was graciously pleased to tell me, when at the council, that I might ask a boon of you,

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which you passed your royal word to grant if in your power," said Wat, firmly; "the request I now prefer is the boon."

"I cannot spare you, good squire," said the King, earnestly; "the example of such men as you goes far to win a battle where dauntless spirit must make up for a deficiency of numbers. I am willing to grant you a leave of absence for a term, but I cannot afford to lose you altogether; besides, I cannot understand how you can, after having performed such brilliant deeds, desire to live a life of inglorious ease at home, when such honors await you abroad."

"We ought not, your Majesty—so have I been taught, and so do I believe—live entirely for ourselves," observed Wat; "and my desire to return and remain at home is contingent only upon the wishes of another. Should I be disappointed in some hopes I entertain when I return to England, I will immediately rejoin your Majesty, and lay down my life in your service, my liege."

"You are actuated by some love affair," exclaimed Edward, looking at him with a penetrating glance, and as Wat thought, almost of scorn. Wat felt a strong flush cross his brow, and had a struggle with himself to refrain from answering haughtily.

"The bravest knight in your Majesty's service wears the favour of some dear mistress," he said; "the most preux chevalier within the realms of chivalry raises his lance to defend the orpheline and unprotected maiden, and will run a tilt for a fair face and a sweet smile, rather than for gold and jewels, or for mere titles. The boldest knight the world e'er saw is not the less to be admired because he loves a gentle girl, whose heart he may have won; nor the proudest monarch need shame at loving that which is fair and lovely to behold—which is nature's brightest ornament. We are all under the influence of circumstances, and your Majesty will not, I trust, think meanly of me if from my childhood to this hour my heart has been in the keeping of a maiden who is very lovely, and as good and pure as beautiful—if in the desire to secure her happiness I forego the bright honours for myself. I love her with my whole soul; it is her image, her spirit that has hovered over me, and led me to gain such laurels as I have been fortunate enough to obtain; for her I would live; and, could it yield her exemption from pain or suffering, would die for her cheerfully. I feel no hesitation in acknowledging this, nor should I, had I to make the same acknowledgment standing upon a high place, and all who have life in the world around me to hear my words—I would utter them more fervently, more enthusiastically, than now I do."

"If 'twere possible," exclaimed Edward, with a smile. He was rather affected by Wat's explanation, for it came a little home to him, as he was at this time madly in love with the Countess of Salisbury, in whose honour he had a short time previously given a grand tournament in London: he laid his hand gently on Wat's shoulder, and said, kindly, "I do not quarrel with thee for loving one who is very sweet and fair. Gra'mercy! an' I did I might—but no matter for that—I will grant thy request for the sake of the maiden who awaits thee in England, and for the good services which you have rendered me; but I shall withhold my promise of knighthood until you return."

"In that, my gracious liege, you will consult your own pleasure," said Wat, perceiving that he hesitated; "let me only trust that I have not offended your Majesty by my request, or that your Majesty will believe, because I am no longer in your service, that my heart and best wishes are not with you."

"I am neither offended, good squire, nor do I believe I have no longer your good inclining towards me and my purposes," replied Edward; "I still feel assured that your will to do me service is as good as ever; and I would not have you take unkindly my wish to withhold the gift of spurs until I can count upon your aid at all and any time. My reign is a stirring one, and my treasury a scanty one; many gallant hearts must be rewarded, and honours occasionally supersede the necessity for a gift which will involve money. I have too few honours to bestow, and from the active service in which they are engaged, it would appear an invidious distinction to suffer even one knight to remain unemployed. You can yourself understand this point better than I can explain it, and will perceive it is from no offended or unkind feeling to you, that I reserve the honour I intended to have bestowed upon you."

"My gracious liege," exclaimed Wat, "I feel your kind condescension to me stronger, more deeply, than had you placed a ducal coronet upon my brow: I shall quit you with a heart more than ever devoted to you; and believe me, I shall not regret that the spurs have not been granted to me, and can even yield up my squire's dignity, to be again the humble Wat Tyler, without feeling the slightest grief, since I have received so much honour in being thus graciously favoured by your Majesty's kindness in granting my request with all the consideration of an affectionate friend—"

"Say no more, good Tyler," cried the King, interrupting him, "or you will make me indeed think, after all your gallantry, after all your exertions in my cause, that it will be no less ungenerous than unkingly not to perform my promise; and, by my troth! after all, upon consideration, I do not think my motives weighty enough to forego it. I will, therefore, even though you leave me—it may be for ever! I hope not—give you the spurs I said thou should'st have."

"Your Majesty will pardon, if I see your motives for withholding too strong for my honour to permit my receiving your gracious gift," exclaimed Wat. "I feel as if I had been thrice a knight, and more than repaid for services which might have been better, but had they been tenfold what they are, would have been amply recompensed by your Majesty's present most noble 'haviour to me. Should I find England holds not for me the one treasure I have looked so anxiously for, I will return at once, and, so please your Majesty, never quit your banner."

"And if thou dost return, good squire," cried the King, animatedly, "the first time my eye lights upon thee my sword shall leap from its scabbard, and thou shalt rise up Sir Walter Tyler. Thou dost wish at once to leave me?"

"Not until the battle between your Majesty and the Duke of Normandy is decided," returned Wat.

"I thought there was still enough of the old leaven within thee to keep thee until thou hadst crossed weapons with an enemy who is so near," said the King, with a laugh. "Well, should it please God and St. George to grant us the victory, or even to forbid it, thou and thy gallant friend shall have your discharge, and be free to do as ye list from henceforward. By the way, I should have seen this dear friend of thine?"

"Your Majesty has," replied Wat.

"I have!" echoed the King, "where?—at what time?"

"At Dinant," returned Wat; "he fought at my side, and did as gallantly as any one there without exception. He never for one moment fell back an

inch before any foe, however powerful; and to his aid principally I owe my success in opening the gates. It was he who took Sir Peter Portebœuf prisoner; and he is the bravest, truest, most simple-hearted being, with the free'st, gentlest spirit in the world."

"I remember him," said the King. "His share of the spoil obtained at Dinant will not be inconsiderable. You are much attached to him?

"I wear him in the innermost recesses of my heart," replied Wat energetically."

"You have been friends long?" observed Edward.

"From infancy," said Wat, "we were the closest companions, and never quarrelled from the earliest hour to this."

"His desire to return equals yours?" asked the King.

"Excels it, unless I were going to remain," answered Wat; "and then I believe, though his very dearest thoughts are fixed on returning to our native place, he would sacrifice everything, and for my sake remain."

"He, then, has a betrothed to return to?" smiled the King.

"He has," answered Wat; "and did your Majesty know how completely his heart is enwrapped in her, you would feel glad that you had the power of conferring so much happiness, by granting him permission to retire from your service, and once more, after so long an absence, regain her side."

"I do feel glad," replied the King, "very glad; it is a pleasure to me to be able to return some slight token of my estimation of those who so gallantly risk their lives in my service. Let me know, immediately you wish to retire, and the permission shall be instantly granted to you."

He then extended his hand for Wat to kiss. He bent on one knee and saluted it; then, bowing low, highly gratified with the result of the interview, he quitted the presence. He related what had taken place to Sir Walter, who then, for the first time, learned Wat's intention to return to England, and, if Violet wished it, quit the army entirely. At first Sir Walter was much surprised, but upon reflection he did not wonder at it; and his behaviour to Wat was what it had ever been, characterised with the same generous feelings as ever, shewing the strongest desire to render him all the service in his power, and secure to him as much happiness as might fall to the lot of man. It was not for Wat's sake alone that he did this, albeit he was very much attached to him; but he knew that in conferring upon him every favour it was in his province to bestow, he was adding to Violet's happiness—she whom he had worn in his heart as the brightest vision of his life, and never suffered to receive taint or sully while there she reigned. At times he would have a strong spasm of the heart to think she might never be his; but he would struggle with it, keep it down, and school himself to believe she was dead, and that he worshipped her memory—that her spirit, the brightest within the realms of imagination or reality, shone down upon him with a glory that had no peer; that she was a mistress whom he could never fold to his heart upon earth, but who awaited him with smiles and a loving heart in heaven. Whatever regret he might have felt that Wat had gained her heart instead of himself, it made no difference in his behaviour to him; he was always the friend he professed himself to be, and Wat had a thousand instances of the reality of his friendship and his sincerity; the regret he expressed when he knew Wat was about to leave him was not assumed or artificial; and when he knew that Edward had not granted the knighthood, his cheeks flushed with anger, and he said no consideration should have withheld him doing justice; and but for the earnest entreaties of Wat, would have proceeded to the King and told him so. Wat had some difficulty to dissuade him, and protesting he should be happier without the honour than with it, succeeded in so far pacifying Sir Walter, that he promised not to mention his feelings on the subject to Edward; but even when Wat quitted him to seek for Michael, he was still angry, still annoyed that Edward had not the heart he himself possessed—a heart that was as clear, and divested of all thoughts of self-interest or base consideration, as the sternest justice could desire, and richer than all the gold and jewels the world ever owned.

When Wat found Michael, he led him back with him to his tent, and then seated himself, Michael following his example; he spoke of a few commonplace things at first, made remarks upon the expected battle with the Duke of Normandy and his followers, and then pausing for a moment, he said, as if thoughtfully—

"I wonder what changes have taken place at Brenchley?"

Here he jumped upon the very theme which went to Michael's heart like an arrow.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands round one knee, and rocking himself backwards and forwards, "I wish we could have a peep at them; I often long for that; very often, as I lay down of a night, I try to think, and have frequently married half the village in my dreams. I remember once fancying that I might find Flora married to that young fellow, Hermann Hardmann, that was so fond of her, and with whom she used to coquet when she wanted to punish me for some little outbreak of temper; I shan't forget the effect the thought had upon me. I felt as if I had had a knife plunged into my heart; I jumped up and the perspiration ran off me like water; then I laughed at myself for thinking so, but it kept me awake all night; and then how I wished I could know what had become of her, where she was, whether she ever thought of me, whether she was merrier or sadder, paler and thinner, more rosy cheeked or stouter. Ah! Wat, I've heard that there are magicians who can shew you a magic mirror, in which if you look, you can see exactly what the person you wish to see is doing; if there is such a thing, and I could find out where, I would give a month's pay to have a peep at what Flora is about."

"It is very strange that they had not returned to Brenchley when Sir Walter went there, or had never, during an absence of four years, sent to say what had caused them to keep away," said Wat, musingly; "you have no idea how that circumstance has haunted me."

"Haven't I!" replied Michael; "I should think I had, when it has been in my head ever since. I wish Sir Walter had brought better news, or had not gone at all; for since he has returned with that mysterious tale, I have almost worn my brain out in trying to imagine what has become of them. I have often thought of that carrying-off affair, which the daughters of mine host of the Sun, in Cheapside, told us, and have had something go chill to my heart, as much as to say that some frightful wrong has occurred, and they have been killed or taken away, never to be recovered any more."

"My thoughts are not so desponding as yours, Michael," said Wat; "I place too much dependence in Ethelbert and Halbert Evesham to believe that ill has befallen them, unless it had happened in some very outrageous manner; still I feel so anxious about them I cannot rest. This feeling has crept upon me

until I can no longer endure it; I don't know why it is, whether it is caused by the loss of poor Rubacelle, or my long absence from Violet, but this I know, that what with the suspense of not knowing what may have befallen her, and not having beheld her for five long years, I am sick at heart, and find pleasure in nothing, nor shall I until I see her."

"Why, if you felt like me, I don't suppose you will," said Michael; "my happiness and comfort now is of a very negative character; for although we have here almost all that men can wish for, yet as Flora does not share my portion, I had rather be without it than with it, for it is impossible to enjoy it, thinking every minute how pleased she would be to see this, to have that, and to know the other. Bless her dear little soul, how often in imagination I hug her to my heart! Ah, Wat, if I knew she was dead, I am sure I should feel like poor John Chandos, who wanders about like a ghost, fights as if the devil possessed him, and hardly ever says a word to a soul."

"Poor John Chandos!" exclaimed Wat, earnestly; "he does take that gentle girl's loss to heart—peace to her soul, and to his!"

"Amen!" exclaimed Michael, fervently.

"I was going to ask you, Michael," said Wat suddenly, after a short pause, "whether you would give up all hopes of future honour and renown, and return to Brenchley, if you had the chance."

"Would I not!" cried Michael, with bright eyes, and then added, "if you went too."

"What if I were to make bold and ask Edward to grant our discharge?" observed Wat, with a sly glance at Michael's face, to see what effect it would have upon him, and saw enough to make him believe he could not have proposed anything which could so exactly have suited his friend's wishes.

"Ah, Wat!" he immediately rejoined, "if you were to do so, it would be the boldest and best thing you have done since you left London. For my part, I don't object to fighting—I like the army very well, perhaps better than anything else in the shape of occupation, and should be contented to remain here as long as Edward thought fit to carry on the war, if I had nothing to call me elsewhere; but as there is, or ought to be, in Brenchley or somewhere else, an object that I love better than aught else in the world, why I don't care how soon we leave Brittany for England. Heigho! it *does* seem a horrible long while since we were in the sweetest of all sweet little places in the world, our own dear village, and were by the sides of those who are more glorious and lovely, and more desirable than all the honour and renown and glory that ever existed. If there is one way more than another in which you can oblige me, it would be by paying your duty to Edward, and telling him that you have had quite enough of fighting, have grown dreadfully tired of Brittany, and are anxious once more to shew yourself to your friends in the old country."

"What do you expect would be the answer?" asked Wat.

"That depends on the mood he happens to be in," rejoined Michael; "if we win this fight with the Duke of Normandy, and you do as you always do, he will say, 'as you please, bold squire—there is your discharge, if you wish to go, and if you choose to stop, why you're welcome.' He might not perhaps use those words, but some to the same effect; at all events, it's worth the trial."

"But suppose, in granting my discharge, he withheld yours?" argued Wat; "men are scarce now, and if he could spare one, it is doubtful whether he would be as gracious to two."

"If he gave me leave to depart, all well and good, I should be the more obliged," returned Michael; "but if he said, 'no, you don t go—I want you, there's more work for you to do,' or something of that sort, I should appear as if I was quite contented to obey his commands, but the first opportunity I had, I should take the greatest possible pains to be found missing; and if they caught me before I got to Brenchley, I would give them credit for a nimble pair of heels."

"Then you do wish to get back to Flora?" said Wat, with a smile.

"Why, I should rather think I did!" he replied; "I have often longed for some good-natured spirit to pop into your head, and make nothing suit you until you were once more at home—and only that I thought it very selfish, I should have hinted as much to you long before this. I don't know how you bear your absence so coolly and comfortably; I can't do it; I think and think until I get red hot, and then cold and sick, then get hot again, and am obliged to walk about and try to think of something else before I can get cool again. I am glad you have brought up the subject, for it is pleasant to talk about; and besides, seeing how earnestly I long to get back again—and I think you do too, for if I was you I should, I know—you may perhaps take it into your head to go at once to Edward, and say, that having made up your mind to go home, you have come to take your leave of him; you can say a word or two—just throw them in casually—about Flora and Violet; and as he is in love himself, he may perhaps have a little sympathy with your feelings, and say, 'good bye, if you will go;' and perhaps give you a message to the Countess of Salisbury, which you can hint at, if he should forget to mention it—it might go a great way in inducing him not only to consent, but to hurry you off as quick as he could; because when people in love send a message, they never like a moment to be lost in its delivery, if it is to be avoided."

"I don't know what effect your counsel would have upon Edward, if I were to follow it," said Wat: "I am afraid it is rather too delicate ground to tread upon—I fear that if I were to try it, it would give way with me, and precipitate me into the mire."

"Well, if you are inclined for England, Wat, say the word, and I am with you without asking any leave whatever," said Michael earnestly; "where you go I'll follow, and I warrant me if we were sent after, that whoever tries to capture us will have their work to do. If ever I had any inclination to fight, that would be the time—and before I gave up the chance of getting away, I would be hewn in pieces."

"I think there will be no need for proceeding to such extremities," said Wat.

"So much the better," said Michael.

"What if I had already seen Edward, and asked permission to return to England?" said Wat.

"What!" exclaimed Michael.

Wat repeated his words.

"Which is as much as to say that you have been," cried Michael, eagerly. "I can see by the expression of your face that you have! Tell me at once, Wat, if you have, what you said, what he said, whether we are to go, or whether he will not give us leave, and we are to go whether he likes it or not."

"I have been," replied Wat.

"And you asked him to grant our discharge?"

"I did."

"And did he?"

"He did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We have his permission, immediately the battle

is over, to depart to our homes, and, if we think proper, to remain there for ever."

"Hurrah!"

Michael's ecstacy at this intelligence was boundless; he sprang up, spun round like a top as he waved his arm in the air, and uttered another stentorian hurrah; he embraced Wat, then wrung his hand; he laughed; he talked so fast that it was scarce possible for Wat to distinguish a sentence. He wondered where Flora was, what she was doing, what she was like, whether she would be surprised to see him, and whether she would marry him when he got home.

"I should think she would, Wat," he exclaimed; "shouldn't you?"

"I think it very likely," observed Wat, smiling.

"Yes, oh yes! I am sure she will," he continued; "that is, if she loves me half so well as I love her; and if she has thought of me since we have been parted half so much as I have thought of her. Ah, I have never forgotten her, no, not for a moment, and always and at all times wished I was near her and we were walking side by side, taking the nearest cut to the chapel where we were to be married. Ha! ha! married, Wat! only think of that—I and Flora man and wife, and nothing then to part us; ha! ha! ha! Who says the world is not a good world, and a brave world, and that there's nothing in it worth living for? Isn't there Flora? I should like to know that—and isn't she worth living for?—I should like to know *that!* I tell you what, Wat, we will both be married a day or two after we get home, and you and Violet shall be godfather and godmother to our first child, and I and Flora will be the same to yours—and then for the second—"

"Not quite so fast, Michael," exclaimed Wat; "let us wait until we get home before we begin to make such calculations."

"Oh, what does it signify," he cried, "whether we are here or there? I can't help thinking it must all happen, because I wish so earnestly for it; and it is so delightful to think about, even if it never takes place—which, horribly grievous as that would be, still I have at least the pleasure of hoping and expecting, a hope nothing can rob me of until the day arrives which is to make me happy or miserable for ever. I think it will be the day which is to bring me happiness, don't you?"

"I do, and most sincerely hope that it will be," replied Wat. "I should regret much, Michael, if you had not the sweet gift of hope, or that you should meet a trouble half way by anticipating the worst; it is quite time enough to be dull and low-spirited when the evil day arrives, without being wretched before you know that you have a right to be so."

"That's just my opinion," said Michael, rubbing his hands gleefully; "that's just what I have often said to myself—I will always hope for the best, I have said, and fancy I am going to be the happiest fellow in the world, make up my mind that I am, and then if I should be completely disappointed, I shall at least have the consolation of reflecting that I had so many years full of pleasant thoughts to balance those that may be evil ones."

"And that, after all that can be said, is the best way, Michael," observed Wat, "providing you possess sufficient strength of mind not to suffer your previous anticipations to magnify the evil when it comes to thrice its actual amount. It is the indulgence in hopes for the best which has supported me during this long absence from Violet. The desire to win honors that she may wear them has been my guiding star since I have been away; and I would not suffer myself to see a time when I should find my efforts had been thrown away, that she for whom I had ventured all would not refuse, or be unable to refuse my laurels, when laid at her feet. I have never suffered myself to believe that I should return and find a change that would bring desolation to my heart; I would never entertain a thought that her heart could be estranged from me—that she had been torn from me, her friends, from happiness, by violence, or that she was married or was dead. On the contrary, I have persuaded myself into the assurance that she was still well and happy, and I should find her the same in heart, in mind, in person—the same sweet, gentle, lovely Violet she was when last I parted from her."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Michael, with evident satisfaction. "I like to hear you say that, Wat—it is just what I feel, and I like you to feel as I do; I take it as a sort of compliment to myself when your ideas coincide with mine. I expect to find Flora everything I can wish when I return—that she will be a little bit taller, quite as handsome—for I don't think she can be handsomer—and not quite so fond of teazing. I fancy she has never flirted with anybody since I have been away; and when I say to her, 'Flora, will you marry me?' that she will throw her arms round my neck and say, 'Yes, with all my heart.' I know what I shall say, and how I shall feel, and if there will be one happier than I living he will be a wonder."

Much more loquaciously did Michael proceed, and Wat listened to him with the kindest attention, glad to see how happy such anticipations made him; and Michael rattled on until he talked himself out of breath—then he laughed, almost danced, and then was a very little way from weeping; it was impossible for any one to have been more delighted than he was at the intelligence he had received, and his spirits were exalted to such an extravagant pitch, Wat had some difficulty in inducing him to repress them, so that unkind constructions might not be put upon his desire to quit the army.

The next morning the battle was to be fought, and several skirmishes took place; but not of much import, as Edward did not wish to be drawn from his favourable position; nor did the Duke of Normandy desire to pour forth his men at a disadvantage, the consequence of which caution was that the day passed away without either side having gained any point. Two or three more were passed in the same fashion, and Edward began to grow weary of this slow method of deciding the contest. He resolved that the next skirmish should lead to a general battle, and the issue should be decided at once; but ere he could put the project into execution, messengers arrived from the Pope, counselling peace; and as the proffers to Edward were every way advantageous, he permitted the mediation of his Holiness to be successful, and a truce being declared, articles of peace for a certain term were agreed upon. Each then withdrew their forces, and Edward, with his people, departed to Hennebon, where, in a short time, Edward himself, with a portion of his people, including Wat Tyler and Michael, returned to England, Sir Walter Manny remaining at Hennebon in command of all the English forces which the King left behind him; Leowulf and Mark Grayling stayed with him to mingle in future scenes of fierce conflict, of strife, and bloodshed.

The farewell between Sir Walter Manny and Wat raised deep emotions in both. Sir Walter was actuated by a variety of feelings, each of which was strong enough to prevent him parting with Wat with anything like indifference. In the first place, the thoughts of Violet, the desire in every little way to

contribute to her pleasure, had induced him to become a staunch friend to Wat. The belief that she would be gratified to know he had studied her wishes acted strongly in making him always the kind friend Wat had ever found him; and though, upon cool reflection, he might have been satisfied that under no circumstances she could ever be his, he could not banish from his mind a latent hope, almost an unconscious one, that it might one day come to pass—that she might at some future period love him, or at least always think more than kindly of him. He entertained this notion without being aware of it, and had he been challenged with doing so, would have laughed and treated the charge as absurd; he, however, did possess it, and it had a strong influence in his behaviour to Wat. When he became more acquainted with Wat's disposition, his manners, and his principles, he became attached to him, independent of the motive which had first drawn him to him; there was something manly and generous in his conduct, a loftiness of principle, of sentiment—such noble aspirations, such honorable feelings, such undaunted courage in all his deeds in the field, and yet withal so gentle and quiet when in peace. He was influenced by no low, base, or grovelling thought, had no infirmities of temper, was always the same generous, high-spirited being, ever disposed to do any one a service who was not undeserving, and never disposed to act unkindly or unlike, in any respect, a man, in the very noblest sense of the word. Sir Walter Manny too, was all this, and in Wat he found a kindred spirit; he sympathised in all his thoughts and actions, and, constantly receiving kindnesses and attentions from him, became as attached to him as if he was his own brother. There was also another feeling which tended to bind Wat to his heart; it was, that our hero was his protegée—was known to be such, and in every act had done him honor, and had not under any circumstance or at any time committed a deed which had brought disgrace upon himself, or reflected discredit upon his patron,—rather, in fact, made it a subject of remark, that Sir Walter had exercised considerable perception and judgment in selecting for his squire one so gallant, and in every way so deserving of his post; and the issue of all these feelings was the very strongest friendship that one man could form for another for five years, that had no alloy, and every day had tended to strengthen them—thus making the hour of parting, with the strongest likelihood of their never meeting again, one of mingled pain and deep regret.

Wat, on his part, was grateful, in the highest sense of the word, for all the favors he had received from Sir Walter: he had been treated always as an equal, had been raised to the highest post Sir Walter had power to bestow; his interest was advanced in every way; and his achievements, which were not surpassed by those of any knight, even Sir Walter himself, raised no jealousy in the breast of the latter, or caused him for one moment to relax in his generous behaviour. Wat possessed a very keen sense of the favors the noble knight had shown him, and was devoted to him for them, and nothing but the all-powerful desire to see Violet, to be with her once again, could have induced him to quit him; but his strong love for her, his incertitude respecting her, and his long absence from her, got the better of his hope for glory, his desire for fame, or his attachment to Sir Walter, and therefore, being the stronger inducement, impelled him to leave. Nevertheless, he could not quit his best friend without feeling a deep regret at the separation, even though he was about to satisfy the dearest wish of his heart; and when they shook each other's hand with the grasp of dear friends who part for years—perhaps for ever—each had a tear rush into their eyes, and felt the emotion rise in the throat which renders the last word almost inaudible.

Michael, on the contrary, left everybody and everything behind him with the most perfect satisfaction in the world; he had made many friends, it is true, for everybody liked him, and he tried to like everybody—a task he found at times rather difficult and unsuccessful, but in the long run was pretty fortunate; still, of all friends he had made and left behind him—Leowulf and Mark Grayling standing first on the list—there was none that held comparison with the inducement to return to England, or rather to Flora; for although he had the *amor patriæ* pretty largely developed, he would never have gone back to the land of his birth if Flora had taken up her abode in any other country. He, therefore—his whole soul being with her—took his leave of everybody with comparative ease, heartily, but without disguising in the slightest that he was quitting with the greatest delight imaginable.

At length the morning arrived that witnessed their embarkation; it appeared to be a long while to Michael before it came, but to his intense satisfaction it did come at last, and he gazed upon the sea, and a clear fresh wind which was blowing fair for England, with the greatest enjoyment and the fondest anticipations. The walls of Hennebon were soon left behind, became a speck upon the waters, and were then lost altogether. The voyage was a quick one, the wind holding in the same quarter without shifting a point. Wat Tyler stood upon the deck, watching the appearance of the land of his birth with the greatest anxiety and interest, and soon a small blue line on the edge of the horizon, seemingly compounded of sea and sky, was pointed out to him as "the island of the free." He watched it until it changed into a white line, and felt sick with excitement to know what changes were in store for him when he should once more touch the ground upon which he had passed his happiest hours. Such was the feverishness he felt, that even Michael's extraordinary succession of speculations and expectations, uttered without cessation, which had always amused him, made him nervous, so that he could not bear them, and he was glad to seek the shelter of his cabin for a time, until by a little exertion he could grow more calm, and prepare himself to bear without flinching whatever fate was awaiting him. The Nore was gained, and then the vessel made a quick run up the Thames until she reached the Tower, where she anchored. Here all the troops accompanying Edward disembarked, and after a short attendance upon the King, Wat and Michael both received their discharge from the army from Edward's own hand, Wat receiving in addition a handsome star, and Michael a ring, showing forcibly the truth of the poet's observation, that

"Honor and shame from no condition rise."

Once free from Edward's presence, they were not long in mounting their steeds and riding to the Sun, in Chepeside, to make inquiries respecting their friends, and endeavour to ascertain whether they had returned from Gloucestershire and had called there on their way to Brenchley. Here, in the first place, they found a change had taken place; Lucy, the host's daughter, was wedded to a handsome young butcher, who had given up his own trade and was now carrying on "ye Sonne," enabling the old host to retire, and still endeavour to discover by what singular accident he had brewed ale so delicious as that which the unfortunate Leon de la Agnelet had flavoured with

Malmsey. Cecilia was about to be married to a young mystifier of woollen cloth—a fellow, but elder apprentice of Nat Nuttles, who, by the bye, had cast his eye on his master's daughter; but, unfortunately, she had turned hers another way, and it had lighted on the son of a merchant, much to his satisfaction, leaving poor Nat in a state of mind perfectly unimaginable. Both Lucy and Cissy remained much the same as when they first introduced themselves into the presence of Wat and Michael, and their light hearts fluttered and palpitated in no small degree when our two heroes alighted at their door and entered their hostel. In a moment both ran out to meet them—in a moment they were recognised for the very young warriors they had only seen once, but had thought of so often, and in a moment they were both kissed as if they were dear old friends—considerably to their own satisfaction, and not a little to that of those who bestowed them. Michael had scarce taken his lips from those of Cecilia, ere he began a string of questions with such remarkable facility that it would have required no ordinary sharpness of ear to have caught the words, memory to retain them, or volubility to have replied to them. As soon as she could recover her breath, which his vehement tenderness had almost taken away, she replied to his first question—"whether they had visited the Sun on their return from Gloucestershire?"—in the affirmative.

"They have?" cried Michael and Wat in a breath.

"Yes," replied Lucy; "it seems your fate to arrive just after they have quitted—it is only two days since they were here."

"Only two days!" exclaimed Michael, eagerly.

"That is all," she replied; "to-day is Thursday; and they quitted early on Tuesday morning for Kent."

"Hurrah!" shouted Michael, with delight, "we shall not be long in their rear."

"Did the party consist of the same persons?" inquired Wat.

"No," replied Lucy, "there was a change; in the first place, there was only one old man instead of two, and in the second place there were four females instead of two."

"Four!" echoed Michael; who could they be?"

"One was an elderly lady," replied Cecilia, "quiet and pale. I think she was the wife of Master Evesham, but Lucy says she knows she was his sister; but they spoke to each other so lovingly, that I don't think they were a bit like brother and sister. I know I'm right, but Lucy's so obstinate, she will have it her way, in spite of eyes and ears."

"She was his sister," said Lucy, "I'm sure of it."

"She wasn't, replied Cecilia, "she was his wife."

"Now, how could you possibly know?" exclaimed Lucy; "I waited most on them, and saw and heard everything, and I ought to be able to tell better than you who are married and who are not, being married myself," she concluded, with a toss of the head.

"I don't care for that," cried Cecilia; "I shall be married soon myself, and I keep a sharp look out I can tell you, to see how married people behave, and I know that they are man and wife."

"Who was the other lady?" asked Wat, to put an end to the controversy.

"Oh, she *was* married," said Lucy; "she was the wife of a serving-man who attended Master Evesham, and she waited upon the elderly lady and the two young ones."

"Aha! now I have it," suddenly cried Cecilia, clapping her hands. "I can prove to you the lady was Master Evesham's wife. Ha, ha! to be sure, to think I should not have remembered that before: you're wrong, Lucy, and you will persist in it—but you were always, as long as I can remember, the most positive and obstinate creature in existence. I knew I was right, and now I can prove it."

"Well, prove it," said Lucy.

"Well, you know the prettiest of the young ladies?"

"Yes, her name was Flora," said Lucy.

"No, it was not, it was Violet," replied Cecilia, quickly.

"It was not, I'm sure," cried Lucy; "at least, I think Flora by far the prettiest, to my taste."

"How can you say so," exclaimed Cecilia, "when your own sense, if you have any, or your own eyes, if you wer'n't blind, would show you that Violet was much the prettiest of the two; only you like to aggravate one, and only say so because you think it will annoy me."

"No, I don't," said Lucy.

"Yes, you do," cried Cecilia; and then, turning to Wat, said, "You know them both—don't you say Violet is the prettiest?"

"Oh, don't ask him—he's sure to say yes," observed Michael, with a laugh.

"The very reason why she should ask me," said Wat; and continued, "but never mind which is the prettiest, let us know how you can prove the elderly lady is the wife of Halbert Evesham; we are more interested in your answer than perhaps you can imagine."

"I am going to speak of Violet, and she is the prettiest of the two—I'd swear to it if it was the last moment I had to live—so now!" said Cecilia, ending with that powerful exclamation, as much as to say, "get over that if you can—I'm not to be moved."

"She ain't," exclaimed Lucy, "is she?" she asked of Michael.

Michael laughed.

"I don't think anybody in the world so beautiful as Flora," he said.

"Um! that's paying present company a pretty compliment," said Cecilia.

"But they are always excepted," said Wat. "Will you be so good as to answer my question? How do you know that the lady accompanying Violet and Flora is the wife of Halbert Evesham?"

"Because Violet, when she spoke to her, said 'dear mother—'"

"Oh! what a story!" cried Lucy. "I never heard her call her mother."

"Called her mother!" exclaimed Wat, eagerly. "Are you sure she said mother?"

"Yes," replied Cecilia, "I am positive she said mother. If I was as much addicted to telling stories as some people, I should scarcely ever speak a word of truth. I heard her say mother, and called Master Evesham father; and I think that's quite enough to prove they were not brother and sister, but man and wife," she concluded, tossing her head significantly.

"Your information is important to me," said Wat, exhibiting much interest in what she had just said; "some circumstances with which I am acquainted induces me to believe that your surmises are correct."

"I know they are," said Cecilia.

"Oh, you only guess it," sneered Lucy.

"Had any other changes taken place among them since they had quitted you for Gloucestershire?" inquired Wat.

"Changes!" echoed Cecilia, "how do you mean?"

"For instance, you said there was but one elderly person, Halbert Evesham, returned," observed Wat. "There were two went from here to Gloucestershire."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, "I understand; I asked after him, and they told me he was dead, poor gentleman."

"Dead!" echoed Wat and Michael in a breath.

"Yes," said Cecilia, "they told me so too; I think they called him Ethelbert."

"That was his name," rejoined Wat.

"He then has been dead nearly four years," exclaimed Cecilia. "I spoke to Violet and Flora, too, about him; the tears came into Violet's eyes as she mentioned his name, and she said they never talked of him now, for his brother took his death very much to heart, and could not bear to hear his name uttered."

"Poor Ethelbert!" ejaculated Wat, mournfully, "his was a sad fate: peace to his soul! I wish heartily I could have seen him ere he had died."

"Oh, don't let's talk of such mournful things," said Lucy, quickly; "it only makes one dull, and don't do any good, for it cannot alter what is past."

"Oh, pray, let us talk of something else," chimed in Cecilia, with a half shudder. "Are you relations to the young ladies you are so anxious about?"

"Why?" asked Michael.

"I think you are—cousins, perhaps? she replied.

"What makes you think so?" he inquired.

"I don't know—because I do," she exclaimed.

"Because you do is no reason, said Michael.

"It is a woman's," said Wat.

"I don't think they're relations," said Lucy.

"Of course not," exclaimed Cecilia, "just because I do."

"No, it isn't," said Lucy.

"Yes, it is," persisted Cecilia.

"It is not," replied Lucy; "they are sweethearts, that's what relations they are; I can see that with half an eye."

"Can you?" said Michael.

"If your half eye was always as sharp," observed Cecilia, "you would not be so often blind when you use both your eyes."

"Indeed!" retorted Lucy, with a sneer.

"Come, come," said Michael, "do not quarrel; do you know," he added, putting his arm round Lucy's waist, "I have taken quite a fancy to you!"

"Why?" she inquired, with a smile.

"Because you said you thought Flora the prettiest creature that was ever seen," he rejoined.

"I did not exactly say that, but I said she was the prettiest of the two; and so she is, and I'll stick to it while I've a tongue in my head," she said decisively.

"I know that very well," said Cecilia, "everybody knows what an obstinate creature you are; you'll never acknowledge yourself wrong when you know you are. I do."

"Do you!" said Lucy, with a short laugh, which said pretty plainly "you don't."

"According to your reasoning, Michael, I ought to take a fancy for this damsel," said Wat, taking hold of Cecilia by the waist, "for she maintains Violet to be the fairest of the two, if not the fairest of the fair."

"Ah, it is all very well, but I'm going to be married, and you musn't take a fancy to me," said Cecilia, looking up wickedly into his face.

"No," exclaimed Lucy, addressing Michael, "nor you to me, for I am married, and what would my husband say?" she added, with an arch laugh.

"Oh, that makes no difference," said Michael, rather inclined to proceed to show that he thought exactly as he said, when her husband, accompanied by Cecilia's intended, entered the room. Like lightning the girls disengaged the arms of Wat and Michael from their waists, and moved themselves a little way off, and stood as if they had not been an inch nearer to them the whole time. Neither the husband nor the lover looked as if they believed this to be exactly the fact, and regarded our heroes with eyes more fierce than complaisant. The girls, however, affected not to see the glum looks of their swains, and appeared as innocent and amiable as though they knew no harm whatever.

"Oh, Gregory," exclaimed Lucy to her husband, "I am so glad you have come; here are two such old friends of ours just returned from the wars."

"Old!" ejaculated Gregory, drily, "they don't *look* very old neither."

"Yes, but I mean that they have known us a very long time," she said, nothing daunted by her husband's coolness.

"It must have been a long time ago, then," he said, "for I've known you ever since you were children, and never heard anything of them—and your father kept you pretty close, to my knowledge."

"You ought to know; it would be strange if you didn't," said Cecilia, with a vexed air. "You came very often sneaking about like a dog that wanted to steal something, when you was after her; and father had promised to throw you out of the window, neck and crop, if ever he found you in the house talking to her; and it would have served you right if he had—we should have had one rude bear the less in the world."

"And if you had followed me, there would have been one vixen less," he retorted.

"Would there!" she exclaimed, angrily; "you are a mannerless brute; you are fit for nothing but to kill sheep and oxen, and to be in a slaughter-house with the ruffians you are so fond of making your boon companions. I never liked you—I always said so, and I never shall; and Lucy was a fool to have you—I wouldn't."

"You were not asked," he sneered.

"No," she said, scornfully, "because you knew you had no chance, or else you would have sneaked after me as you did after her, and if I was Lucy—"

"But you're not Lucy," interrupted Gregory.

"I'm thankful I'm not, because then I should have you for a husband. Why, how you stand!" she suddenly exclaimed, addressing her lover. "I thought you at least knew a little better manners; and when old friends of mine were introduced to you, you would have shown them a little respect and courtesy."

Now it so happened that her swain had a very strong misgiving that Wat and Michael were not the old friends she represented them to be, and he had an instinctive dislike to soldiers when they were in company with the chosen of his heart, because he thought them rather more attractive than there was a necessity for, and made themselves much too agreeable. He had little or no doubt that his ladye love and Wat were rather in closer companionship than mere acquaintanceship exactly warranted, and he felt a twinge of jealousy, as if his friend Gregory had, with his butcher's knife, given him a score across the heart; he, therefore, was in no mood to be particularly civil or gracious to either of the warriors: on the other hand, he did not like to be as cool as Gregory, for fear he should be favored with as warm a castigation of Cecilia's tongue; consequently he thought it best to steer a middle course, and essayed a smile when she addressed him, but did not say a word. This to Cecilia was as bad as Gregory's behaviour, and darting a look of angry impatience upon him, she said—

"If you are not the fool you look, welcome my friends as they ought to be welcomed, and show that your tongue is not as stupid as your appearance. Why, what is the use of your grinning? you have neither a pretty mouth nor good teeth; say something, and don't stand with that red face, and look as if you

had swallowed a roll of woollen cloth, and found it difficult of digestion."

"Your tongue runs glibly this morning, Cissy," said the young man, with a slight laugh, which sounded more like the growl of a dog, just as he has made up his mind to bite, than mirth.

"And so will my hand," she exclaimed, "if you are resolved to make yourself such a ninny. If you are a fool, there's no necessity to take pains to let everybody see it."

"Why, what would you have me say?" he exclaimed, looking gloomy, and growing rather restive, a broad red flush across his forehead and cheeks being a remarkably strong symptom of it.

"What would I have you say!" she repeated, with an assumption of contempt. "What would you expect me to say, if you brought some old friends of yours to see me? What would you say, if I treated them as you are treating mine, I should like to know?"

"Well, I am glad to see your friends," he muttered.

"That's a story," said Cecilia; "I know you are not."

"Well, then, I am not," cried he, breaking out into a furious tone of voice, and violence of gesture, "and they can see I ain't, and I don't care if they know it, and I don't care how they take it. I'm not afraid of them, though they are such mighty fierce soldiers; and I can tell them they are not wanted here, and the sooner they go the better."

Cecilia's breath was completely taken away by this volley; she stood aghast, and looked quite bewildered. Both Wat and Michael had enjoyed the scene considerably, and even upon hearing the vehement speech of Cecilia's swain were not moved or affected by it, but laughed with the greatest good nature. Wat was about to speak, on finding a pause take place, but was prevented by Cecilia, who, having found her tongue, burst forth with,—

"You are a—a rude, ungainly—a—a—I'll serve you out for this, sir; you shall smart for this—you—you—"

But she could not get a name to suit her opinion of his conduct; and so, to completely humble him to the dust, she burst into a torrent of tears—a most efficacious remedy to bring a lover to his senses, as many a young damsel has found to her extreme satisfaction. It had the same effect upon her swain; but he made a hard struggle not to show it, and addressed the warriors rather more appealingly than before, a point of submission Cecilia very speedily discovered, and would have been a little unlike her sex—perhaps *not* a little, but it is best to be rather delicate on such a point—if she had not resolved to take advantage of it.

"Your best course," said he to our heroes, "is to depart; you see you are only causing words—therefore go at once. I tell you candidly you are not wanted; so go."

"Are you master of the house?" said Cecilia, withdrawing her handkerchief from her eyes suddenly. "Are you master of the house?" she repeated, "that you should say they had better go, and they are not wanted? How do you know they are not wanted? I can tell you they are more wanted than you are; now, how do you like that? Not wanted, indeed! you had better turn us all out, and take possession at once. How long have you been master here, I should like to know?"

"If he's not master here, I am," exclaimed Gregory; "and if they don't go peaceably, they shall be made by force."

"You master here!" cried Cecilia, with affected surprise. "Lucy, do you hear him, and say nothing? Well, if you are such a fool, I am not. I can tell you, Mr. Gregory, that you are not master here; one half of this house is mine, and the other is Lucy's; and so far from you being master, you are only tolerated here."

"Tolerated!" roared Gregory.

"Yes, tolerated," replied Cecilia. "If I had not coaxed father, you would never have had Lucy; and I persuaded her to tell him she would run away if he didn't consent; and so of two evils he chose the least, and permitted her to throw herself away upon you, and admitted you upon sufferance here. If I had known you then as I know you now, my fine fellow, you should never have been Lucy's husband."

"Your tongue wags too fast and too saucily," said Gregory, biting his lips; "it will get you into a scrape some day."

"Will it!" she jeered.

"Yes," he replied; "and I am not going to suffer it to cow me—don't think it."

"No fear of its cowing you," she exclaimed, with a scornful laugh, "you will never be anything else but a calf."

"Very witty, but it will not stay me in my purpose," he said, with decision; "and however pleasant it may be to you to have the arms of *old* friends round your waist, I don't intend that my wife shall partake of that enjoyment; so old friends or not old friends, the gentlemen will take themselves off."

"How foolish you make yourself, Gregory," said Lucy; "these are indeed friends we have known a long time, and are the betrothed of the two maidens who were here with Master Evesham two days since, whom you escorted part of the way to their home; they have just returned from France with King Edward, and were making inquiries respecting Master Evesham and the young ladies when you entered the room."

Gregory looked incredulous.

"I can assure you that I speak the truth," she added; "is it not so?" she said, turning to Wat.

"Pooh!" cried Cecilia, "I would not take the trouble to satisfy him."

"You have heard the truth," said Wat, addressing Gregory. "I have been a long time absent from England, and was naturally anxious to learn all I could respecting my earliest and best friends, in order that I might be prepared for any change that had taken place."

"Is it your custom to make inquiries respecting old friends with your arms round the waist of those from whom you seek the information?" asked Gregory, sarcastically.

"It is not my custom to speak *to* old friends with my hands behind me," replied Wat, readily.

"Nor mine," echoed Michael, with a laugh.

"Whatever your customs may be, you will not be allowed to exercise them here," said Gregory, chafing; "you have asked your questions, you have had your answers and—now go," he added, laying his hand upon Wat's shoulder; but our hero immediately displaced it, and said, with an unruffled countenance,—

"Gently, friend Gregory! 'Play not with sharp instruments,' is a motto we have in the army—I counsel thee to bear it mind in thy dealings with me; you may lead me, but cannot drive me—you may persuade me to leave thy house, but cannot make me. I neither wish to wound or trifle with thy feelings; and had'st thou not have treated me so discourteously, I should ere this have departed. It was the custom—you see I am fond of customs, and adhere to

them—in my birthplace to render hospitality to every one, whether they needed it or not; and never, under any circumstance, however criminal the individual that sought it, to insult them while beneath the roof. You have broken through this law, for it is little else—denied me the first, and offered me the second; and the effect upon me is, that, instead of quitting at your wish, I shall stay as long as I please, and not depart until I see fit."

"Delightful!" cried Cecilia, clapping her hands together with ecstacy. "Bravely said! Stay here a month or two, just to spite them—you have my warm invitation to do so."

"I should be sorry to be compelled to make you bundle out neck and heels," said Gregory, grinding his teeth, "but unless you depart in another minute, it shall be done."

"Instead of being sorry," said Michael, seating himself upon a table, and swinging his legs beneath with the coolest indifference, "you ought to be proud to be able to accomplish it. I am not fond of boasting—God forbid that I should be; but I have made a troop of fellows—each one would have made two of you—give ground before me, so that I think it hardly likely that if you attempt your violence you will prove successful; and in conclusion, I tell you candidly, and mean what I say, while Wat Tyler remains here, I remain."

"Who?" cried Gregory, with an appearance of astonishment.

"He who stands in front of you—Wat Tyler," rejoined Michael.

"You are a great friend of Sir Walter Manny's, even his squire, are you not?" said Gregory, addressing Wat, with an altered manner.

"I have so great a satisfaction," returned Wat.

"Then I beg your pardon for my roughness," replied he. "I have just parted with one of your followers, a cousin of mine, who returned with you, and he said so much to me about you, that I am proud to have you in my house."

"Oh dear," cried Cecilia; "here's a change!—what, you have found yourself in the wrong, my sweet brother-in-law, have you?"

"I have," he rejoined, "and I am not ashamed to confess it," he added, frankly.

"Well!" she exclaimed, "it is something to see that you have a little grace left."

"I was wrong too, Cissy," said the young lady's admirer, in a soft, insinuating voice; "and if I had known who your friends were, I should have behaved differently."

"Should you indeed!" she replied, with a sneer. "Don't think, sir, I am to be coaxed over in that way; my friends ought to be your friends, whatever their situation in life; and I am not going to let them be insulted by you, and then look amiable and agreeable to you, as if you had very much pleased me by your conduct, don't believe it. No, sir, I'll trouble you not to call me Cissy any more, for no more such familiarities will I take from you—you have done for yourself; you may take yourself off, and if you never come back again you will be doing me the only favour I desire at your hands. Take your arms from my waist this moment; if it is pleasant to have those of old friends there, it is not to have yours—so leave me alone, and be off."

"You don't mean that, Cissy?" said the young man, appealingly.

"Don't I!" she said, affecting great seriousness; "take your hands away, I tell you, sir," she added, stamping her little foot with an assumption of anger, "and don't call me Cissy, for I don't like it from you, and I won't have it. Now go along, and don't make yourself a greater fool than you are."

"Nay, pretty Cissy," said Wat, "don't be too hard-hearted—let us all be friends; I have only just returned from a long absence, and I should regret that the first hour of my arrival should create ill-will between any one."

"Then he should not behave himself in such a manner," replied Cecilia, "and just because I was glad to see an old friend, frown, and look black, and behave like a bear; I'm not going to put up with such vagaries, I can tell him. I would not have behaved so to any of his friends, and he shan't to mine; and shall not have the opportunity, for rather than tie myself to such an ill-natured, selfish creature, I would die an old maid fifty times over; and I am not afraid of doing that, for there are plenty who would almost go mad to have me, and never think one thing I did wrong; so he may take himself off whenever he pleases; it is perfectly indifferent to me what he does, so that he does not stop here and annoy me."

"Come, come, Cissy, don't be so cross," said her lover. "I am sorry I was so rude, and you shall never see me so again"—'until I am married to you,' he thought, but did not say it; "come, forgive and forget, give me your hand and be friends."

"You shall have it on your face, if you don't go along," she replied, beginning, as she had promised, to serve him out, and fully resolving, before she had done, that he should have no cause to complain that she had not kept her word. "The sight of you is painful to me; I wish you would go; *you* are not wanted, although you did take so much upon yourself to say our friends here were not—"

"Let us have no quarrelling—no recrimination, I am neither offended nor annoyed," said Wat; "we are all liable to do the same under the same circumstances; so we will shake hands all round, and in a stoup of wine bury all differences."

"Well," said Cecilia, favouring Wat with a smile, and a look that made her lover wince again, "I will do what you wish me to do, so there is my hand, Ulric; but if you are ever as uncourteous again to any of my friends, I will never be friends with you again."

"Oh, never fear," exclaimed Ulric, kissing her hand. "I can't bear to see you cross, so I will not offend again."

He little thought what he was promising. Cecilia had not, to her own fancy, half served him out yet, nothing like half, and she determined that he should not lose one atom of his full quantity; she therefore seated herself by the side of Wat, leaving Ulric to get a chair for himself, which he did, and placed rather near to her; but she immediately requested him to move it further off.

"You know how hot it is," she exclaimed, pettishly; "one don't want to be smothered alive."

Ulric moved further off, but was unable to convince himself that he was more likely to produce suffocation in sitting near her than Wat, to whom she had drawn herself so close that her shoulder touched his, and, as if for convenience, he laid his arm round the back of her chair. It looked to those who were spectators as if he had his arm round her waist. Ulric never for one second entertained a doubt upon the matter, and wished every old friend in the universe tied up in a bundle and cast into the Red Sea, or rather any sea that had no bottom to it. And then his jealous feelings were by no means allayed on perceiving that Cecilia laughed and talked a very great deal in an under tone, and that her eyes laughed more than her lips; and she would whisper, and then

cry, "Oh, fie!" and make various other little exclamations of admonition, the reason for which Wat himself was as ignorant of as the unfortunate Ulric, who sat watching the pair with "eyes of fire," and finding the weather an immense deal hotter than he had fancied it a quarter of an hour previously. Wat laughed to see all the little manœuvres which Cecilia practised to annoy her swain, and did not offer to check it, in consideration of the contumely he had received from both Ulric and Gregory; and, therefore, when Cecilia leaned against him and whispered in his ear, he laughed, and replied in a low voice, which had the effect of torturing the unfortunate wight dreadfully, and heating him almost to a white heat; he felt as if it would have been the greatest satisfaction to him to have twisted Wat's neck, and give her a good shaking. And she, who saw his misery by the changes in his countenance—changes which women can so quickly read—and the drops of perspiration that rolled down his forehead, was inexpressibly delighted at her success, and continued with renewed vigor her pleasantries, occasionally addressing him and receiving some incoherent reply in return, which raised her satisfaction to a greater height still; and she would endeavour to extract a laugh from him now and then, which, when it came, was given with such a solemn arrangement of features, that no one could have divined by a glance at his face that he was giving utterance to sounds of merriment, making Cecilia quite happy to think the serving out went on so bravely.

Michael, who thought he saw Wat's arm round Cecilia's waist, fancied he could not do better than follow his example by drawing Lucy very close to him, and making no secret that, as an old friend, it was his custom to make inquries with his arm round the waist of the yielder of the information. Gregory grinned to see it—not exactly a grin of satisfaction, although he tried to make it appear so; but at the same time he thought Lucy ought to be ashamed of herself to sit there so quiet, and instead of appearing offended, to look as if she rather liked it.

"You make yourself at home," he said to Michael.

"Yes," said Michael, "it's my way with old friends;" and he gave Lucy a squeeze which made her smile, and her husband to turn away for the sake of having a little private bite of the lip.

"Gregory! Gregory!" cried Cecilia, suddenly, "are we to have no wine to-day?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am just going to call Durth to get it."

"No, no," she replied, "get it yourself; I am not going to drink the poor stuff that Durth is sure to bring us. Let us have some from the cask that stands at the further end of the cellar, on the right-hand side—it is marked with a cross, and number one upon the top."

"It isn't broached," said Gregory, hastily.

"Well," she replied, "that's of no consequence, you can go and broach it; Ulric will go with you, and help you."

"You had better take Durth with you, Gregory," exclaimed Ulric, quickly, for he had not the least inclination to leave Cecilia with Wat: "I don't understand anything about it."

"There's nothing to understand," said Cecilia, "you have only got to hold a torch—you are not quite so foolish, I suppose, but what you can do that? Besides, we cannot spare Durth; some one might come into the parlour, and neither I nor Lucy are going to leave our friends just to wait upon whoever comes in, I can tell you."

"Come along, Ulric, we shan't be long," said Gregory—for he saw that if he refused there would only be more words, and even then he should be obliged to go—and it was something to have a companion in misfortune. Ulric was very loth to go, but he saw a frown beginning to lower on the brow of Cecilia as he hesitated, so he submitted with a bad grace, and an appealing look at her to think of him *a little* while his back was turned, and not be as gracious to Wat as if no such person as Ulric existed in the world. She, however, took no heed of it, but turned her head away, and kept rattling on with a quantity of nothings; and Ulric dashed out of the room in a state of desperation after Gregory, who had just gone. He returned a moment after, on pretence of having dropped his handkerchief, and found that the parties had not changed their positions, or appeared at all embarrassed by his sudden entrance; and a little re-assured by this, he went away with a better grace.

Perhaps no cask was ever broached in a shorter space of time than was the one marked with the cross and number one; not a moment was wasted, and the stoup of wine was placed on the table in less time than at any other period Gregory would have taken to have singled out the cask, much less have broached it; and when they entered the room, they favored the gentlemen and ladies with the very sharpest scrutiny their eyes, or any eyes, could manage. The gentlemen appeared as cool as ever, but both the ladies had cheeks more flushed than before, and hair decidedly more disordered—at least so both thought—but the eyes of the jealous frequently find appearances and symptoms of faithlessness where none exist, and such might have been the case in the present instance. Both Gregory and Ulric were quite satisfied that there had been kissing going on during their absence, but whether their surmises were correct, never transpired. They seated themselves to the wine, and as the jealous gentlemen made very free with the generous fluid to drown their chagrin, they soon began to have desultory ideas of things in general, and forgot the unpleasant feelings they had been laboring under, and swore there were never two better fellows in the world—none they were more glad to see or to know were old friends of Cecilia and Lucy, than Wat Tyler and Michael Rycheart.

Wat led the conversation to the friends he had come in search of, and learned from Gregory several particulars respecting them; how he had journeyed with them to Dartford, and how he had left them making the best of their way to Brenchley. Warmed by the wine into enthusiasm, he expatiated upon the beauties of both Violet and Flora with such glowing eloquence, that Lucy became a little grand, and thought it a pity that he did not journey with them to Brenchley, and there take up his abode, that he might have while he lived such extreme loveliness ever in his sight; and then, by way of giving effect to what she had said, displayed little effervescences of tenderness to Michael, which would have made Gregory at any other time commit frightful devastation upon his flowing locks; but as the wine mounted to his brain, jealousy walked out of his heart, and he only laughed with great glee at what, had he been sober, would have made him chafe and storm with direst fury. Cecilia's swain, too, moved by Gregory's description of the two ladies in question, expressed his considerable regret that he had not been so fortunate as to see them while they stayed at Y^e^ Sunne, or that he had lost the opportunity of joining Gregory in escorting them on their way to Brenchley, which lamentation drew from Cecilia such an estimate of his personal appearance and qualifications, as to make it evident to every one who heard her, that, if she spoke truth, his regret was quite unnecessary; for whatever

effect the beauty of the maidens might have upon him, his appearance could excite nothing in them but ridicule and disgust. By a little judicious management, Wat contrived that the young fashioner of garments should take it all in good part, and so dexterously eluded the many small tokens of regard which, in defiance of her lover's presence, the young lady would have bestowed upon him—all to carry on the serving-out—that the swain had no reason to drop the opinion the wine he drank had caused him to entertain of our hero.

Thus passed away the time, apparently with much pleasure: but both Wat and Michael were too anxious to be on their way to Brenchley to be exactly contented to remain long at "Ye Sunne;" therefore, when the stoup of wine had been emptied for the third time, and both Gregory and the tailor were fancying that it was at least the middle of the night, and that they were, as all proper and prudent persons should be, safe in bed, and perfectly unconscious that they had fallen back in their chairs in a state of stupor, our heroes determined upon at once departing. It was in vain that the two sisters tried hard to persuade them to remain, giving them to understand, by sundry small hints and significant looks, that it would be most agreeable to them, and every effort should be made to make it agreeable, too, to the warriors. Perhaps they thought it might be too agreeable, and, therefore, would not suffer themselves to be persuaded; so accordingly bidding them a tender farewell, and forbearing to rouse the swains, whose dormant state began to be attended by nasal and unmusical accompaniments, they quitted the hostel, mounted their steeds, and kissing their hands to the two girls, who stood at the door to see the last of them, they galloped off, and crossing over London bridge, made the best of their way, sparing not the spur or the steed, to the little village which contained what they valued more than aught in the world beside.

CHAPTER VI.

"And does the long-left home she seeks
Light up no gladness on her cheeks?
The flowers she nurs'd—the well-known groves,
Where oft in dreams her spirit roves—
* * * * *
Can these delights, that wait her now,
Call up no sunshine on her brow?
No—silent, from her train apart,—
As if ev'n now she felt at heart
The chill of her approaching doom—
She sits, all lovely in her gloom,
As a pale angel of the grave." T. Moore.

"——— that word was all he spoke,
And 'twas enough—the shriek that broke
From her full bosom told the rest—
Panting with terror, joy, surprise.
The maid but lifts her wondering eyes,
To hide them on her Gheber's breast!
'Tis he, 'tis he!" *Ibid.*

"Oh, in this precious hour he prov'd
How deep, how thorough-felt the glow
Of rapture, kindling out of woe;—
How exquisite one single drop
Of bliss thus sparkling to the top
Of misery's cup.
* * * * *
She, too, while gazing on those eyes
That sink into her soul so deep,
Forgets all fears, all miseries." *Ibid.*

"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale."
Burns.

THE demise of the sorrowing Editha, though not without its accompaniment of sorrow and regret, had been so long foreseen and expected, that it was not productive of such prolonged mournfulness as would otherwise have been the case; but a short time was suffered to elapse after the burial of Editha, ere Halbert and his family prepared to quit the residence of Hartuif, the honest smith, "the man without flaw."

It may be as well, perhaps, here to state the cause of Editha and Ghita having taken up their abode in Hartulf's dwelling. While staying, through the kindness of the simple Ulph, at the village at Troll Hill, the village was subjected to attacks and villanous oppression, by the robbers who infested that part: a few of the more daring villagers endeavored to resist and make a stand against them, while a small party was sent to Hartulf for assistance; it was granted them. A numerous band of smiths and miners accompanied them to their village, and, by dauntless intrepidity succeeded in delivering the inhabitants from their oppressors. Among those who gave their assistance was Fell, the swineherd, and when the battle was over, he helped to bear some of his comrades to a spot where their wounds could be attended to: among those who were most active in ministering to the wants and hurts of the sufferers, he discovered both Editha and Ghita; he was delighted to meet with them, and ere he quitted, persuaded them to change their residence, and remove to Hartulf's cottage, because they would be in every way safer and more comfortable. They were quite assured of his truth and sincerity, were induced to comply with his

wishes, and found in every way the benefit. He had married the eldest daughter of Hartulf, and, therefore, to a certain extent, had the power of giving the invitation; one which, as soon as the old man was acquainted with, he warmly reiterated—for long since from Fell he had heard Ghita's history.

Upon the morning of the day on which Ethelbert, with his brother, and the two maidens, had arrived at Taynetone, Sir John Maltravers had accompanied the leader of the robbers already mentioned, to claim recompense for the destruction of his followers by Iron Arm; he accidentally encountered Editha, who shrunk horrified from his sight and buried herself in her chamber, fearing a second interview, or that his vile machinations might once again draw her into his power; hence her sudden seclusion, and the reason for her meeting not with Ethelbert until he was on his death-bed. The same cause prevented her seeing either Violet or Flora until they met by his bed side.

Every attention that could be shewn to Editha while she lived was paid to her—every respect to her memory when dead; and a fortnight after her interment, Halbert, Ghita, Violet, and Flora, with Ulph and his wife, took their farewell of the honest smith and his family, and passed through the Forest of Dean, on their way to London. Benulph, with a party of friends, accompanied them until they had cleared the forest, and were free from all danger of being intercepted, and then they parted. London was gained after rather a fatiguing journey, and a few days were spent at "Y^{e} Sunne," to recruit themselves; and then, attended by Gregory, the husband of Lucy, they started for Brenchley; he quitted them at Dartford, and they continued their journey. After an absence of nearly five years, they were once more in the dear little village.

How they were welcomed back again! How soon it spread through the village that Halbert, the mild and wise, had once more come among them, bringing the belle of the village with him, the beautiful and adored Violet! How the maidens thronged round her, and greeted her affectionately! How the young men pressed round to offer their warm welcomings, and how very kind and respectful did Ghita find them all immediately it was known that she was the wife of Halbert, and the mother of Violet! How eagerly was the sweet little village scrutinised by the new comers, to see what change it had undergone during their absence; and how glad were they to find that it was still the same sweet spot as when they had quitted it, or, at least, whatever changes had been made, had rendered it prettier than ever!

Then, too, there was Dame Tyler and her husband, no whit changed from what they were five long years ago; and there was Michael's mother, too, the same quiet, kind, good old soul as ever. Ah! how many questions she had to answer the first moment Flora clapped eyes upon her; and Dame Tyler, too—but what had they to answer, more than that their sons had been home once, and found no Violet nor Flora there; had looked upon the village as a wilderness, and hurried away from it heart-sore at its loneliness. And that noble knight and sweet gentleman, Sir Walter Manny, had been there too several times during his stay in England, and having discovered the favorite places Violet visited, had been to them all—hanging about them as any true lover haunts the spots an absent mistress loved; but beyond this there were no tidings to tell them, save that both Wat and Michael had distinguished themselves greatly, and were in high favour with the King—so at least Sir Walter had reported; but since he had quitted they had heard nothing respecting them whatever, and knew not whether all the world was admiring their prowess, or the cypress waved over their graves.

Violet could not help entertaining a painful presentiment that the worst chances of war had taken place, and Wat had fallen in some gallant effort to distinguish himself; so long a period had elapsed since she had seen him, or tidings had been received from him, that she could not but conceive that one of the noblest, kindest-hearted beings had been sacrificed upon the altar of glory to do her honor.

Away from home—experiencing herself changes and vicissitudes, she had not felt his absence anything like so strongly as now she did upon her arrival at Brenchley: not that while away his image had retrograded in her heart—no, not in one small degree; but she had more occupation for her thoughts—there was the dying Editha to tend with unceasing care; there were her parents to shew, by a thousand tender acts, the love she bore them; and there was frequently Flora, whose thoughts and remembrances would overcome her natural flow of spirits, and would sink down to the lowest state of oppression, requiring all her kind solacing to cheer and comfort; and that none might think themselves slighted or neglected, she was ever employed in displaying to them the kindness and sweetness of her disposition by numberless attentions, so that there was little opportunity to dwell sadly upon the fortunes of him who was far away.

She was away from home, and that robbed Wat's absence of some of its pain, because it led her, unconsciously, to think that she was away from him; it appeared as if he was still at Brenchley, that he had not gone away; but she had, and she had only to return to the village to see him and that beloved place together; and as day passed after day, she had always the hope that this desired event would speedily come to pass; so that, when thinking of Wat, it was with no fear that he might be no more, but as of one from whom she was parted but for a short time, and of whom she should speedily see smiling as of old. When she did come to Brenchley and found that he was not there—had not been there for five years—had not been heard of for more than three years—she felt at once the chill upon her heart which foreboded the worst; nor were these apprehensions quieted by the conduct of Wat's mother, who, in speaking of him, tried, for Violet's sake, to do so cheerfully, but suddenly burst into a torrent of tears, threw herself upon a chair, and rocking herself to and fro, wept bitterly, saying her beloved child had fallen in one of those terrible battles she was sure, and that she should never see him again. It was a hard task for Violet to try and cheer her when her own heart with the same presentiment was so low, but she did try it even with tears in her eyes, and twined her arms round her neck, and bade her not to give way to grief, for Wat would yet come back. The dame tried to conquer her weakness, and in some degree succeeded—at least she would not again let Violet see how strongly her painful surmises had laid hold upon her heart; and when, a short time after their conversation, Halbert spoke of him, she so far mustered her feelings as to reply cheerfully, that she hoped still to see him come back a fine, handsome, gallant fellow, who had won all he had left Brenchley to obtain.

Violet had been but one day in Brenchley, could have seen but little of it, yet it looked not now like the same place to her it had when she first approached it; as soon as she had learned Wat was not there, the old familiar face faded away, and it seemed no

longer the sweet spot in which she had passed her happiest hours. Now, indeed, did she miss Wat; without him the place looked cheerless and desolate—it was in outward appearance the same, but it did not possess the charm it had once had; it was a frame without a picture; a body without a heart; in truth, it was Brenchley without Wat Tyler, and what to her was the village without him? little else than a blank; a landscape without sunshine. She felt the want of him there, as the presence of a beloved one of whom the grave hath robbed us is missed from the dwelling they rendered bright and happy, and as the vacant chair, the untenanted chamber, the unoccupied place at the table makes the sense of the loss greater, so did the sight of all the places they were accustomed together to visit, make her feel most keenly that he was not there; that, indeed, they were separated perhaps for ever, and that if a doubt before existed that he was essential to her happiness, there was none now.

She did not like to show how dull and sad she really felt, for she knew how anxiously and tenderly her every motion was watched by her parents; she even tried to shake off the presentiment of evil that oppressed her, and to reason herself out of her fears, but found the task too difficult. She knew he was, if spared, constantly engaged in strife and bloodshed, and there were many reports afloat of the terrible loss of life which the wars had occasioned; the frequent levies of taxes and of men which took place all over the country told a tale which made those who had relatives and friends in the army shudder, and dread that those who had left them smiling and in health would never more return, but would leave their bones to whiten in a foreign land.

Three years appears but a short term when past, or merely spoken of; but when it embraces the absence of one who is beloved, for whom fears of the worst kind are entertained, when day after day passes away without one tiding, good or bad, it makes that short space a weary age—a long dreary series of months, each month in itself appearing a year, and Violet could not bear to think that so long a period had elapsed, and there had not been one word from Wat, to tell them whether they should be glad and joyous, that he was well and happy, high in favour, and winning laurels, to make him the admired and honoured of the army, or whether they should clothe themselves in mourning, and weep the loss of one who was dearer to their hearts than any other being on earth.

The brief space of time that had passed since her arrival in Brenchley, found her more sad in heart, more oppressed with low thoughts and sorrowful expectations, than she had been since she had quitted it. She had here everything to refresh her memory with his worth, his generosity, his devotedness to her; there was not a spot upon which she could cast her eye that did not bring a remembrance of some deed of his that showed his love for her; there was not even a face that greeted her upon her arrival with which there was not some sweet associations of Wat; and when she looked around, impressed with these feelings, and knew his person would not glad her sight, and she could not give joy to her heart by saying when it would, she felt she could wander away alone and weep with all the despair and desolation of a broken heart.

Flora, who watched every change of her countenance with the greatest affection, soon perceived the sore spirit that was struggling within, and so often as she had been the recipient of solace and consolatory words from Violet, felt it no less a duty than a matter of inclination to do the best in her simple but earnest way to repay the kindness she had received, and endeavor to turn the current of Violet's oppressed feelings into a brighter channel. She set herself to work, and with intuitive perception, knew that to allude direct to the cause of the grief would be of little avail. She commenced by speaking of matters with which our hero had little connection, and endeavored to make them possess such interest that in her attention to them, Violet would forget the sad things upon which her mind was dwelling. But, unfortunately, her success did not equal her zeal, and in spite of her best efforts, the thoughts of Michael run so strongly in her own mind, that insensibly she got round to the topic she had intended to avoid, and enlarged upon it most amply; and then of a sudden she remembered herself, and in attempting to fly off to another subject, got confused, embarrassed, and then burst into tears at what she termed her wicked thoughtlessness, for adding, by her remarks, to the very sorrowfulness it was her aim to destroy.

Violet kissed her, and bade her dry her tears; and, to reassure her, denied that she was dull or sad more than was incident to change of place—to the return, after such strange and eventful occurrences, to her birth-place—a place with which so much was connected respecting past happiness, and which raised such a crowd of thoughts and remembrances as to give her an appearance of sadness which she did not in reality feel. Flora, however, was not to be deceived by her kind words, and though she said nothing more at the time, and repressed her tears, she resolved, in her turn, if it was possible, to prove the kind solacer and comforter which Violet had hitherto proved to her.

There was, perhaps, one thing which gave Flora a chance of accomplishing this; she was of a very sanguine temperament—hope was everything to her; she could always fly to it and find support there, even in her most despondent moments; but touch upon hope, make a probability of the best coming to pass, and she would at once recover from her sadness, and indulge in anticipations of the brightest nature, completely banishing all her former depression.

Thus Violet, who understood her nature, was able easily to cheer her; she knew the chord to touch on, and rarely failed; and there was something so fresh in Flora's hopes, her expectations were always so bright when they did come, that they frequently had an influence upon Violet she could have scarcely credited; and many times, in listening to Flora's castle-building, would find herself carried away by them, and in a pleasing reverie indulging in the sweetest dreams of future felicity. Flora had been quick enough to perceive it, and had kept on in the same strain, that Violet might receive the same pleasure from those thoughts as she did herself; and now that she perceived there was a greater necessity than ever for rousing Violet from her low spirits, she determined that it should not be her fault if she was not as cheerful as she had ever been.

Upon the evening subsequent to their arrival in Brenchley, they strolled out together to revisit some of the old familiar places. It was scarcely by accident—who could suppose it was?—that Violet directed her steps to the little bank prankt with sweet flowers, to which Wat, when quite a boy, and she a slight child, barely recovered from the long illness which her fall into the village stream had occasioned her, led her—the same bank where she had parted from Wat—the same spot upon which Violet and Flora sat the first night she ventured abroad after the dangerous attack which the departure of

Michael had produced. To both the spot possessed many charms, and both, without naming their intention to each other, wended their steps towards it when they quitted the cottage, as though it had been previously decided upon by them that their first visit should be made there. They soon gained it; and there it stood as of old, more wild and confused in its luxuriance of flowers than it had been when Wat tended it; but still there it was, and the charm attached to it depended less upon its appearance than upon the associations connected with it. They sat themselves down upon it, and for a short time they each kept silence. Flora was the first to break it, and said—

"Do you remember the last time we visited this spot? I was then weak and ill, and very sad and dispirited; and you said so many kind things, after having been like an angel to me. Oh, Violet, I shall never forget it, and have often wished that Heaven would place in my power some opportunity of doing you a service—the greatest that can be—to shew you how grateful I am for what you have done for me."

"Think not of it, dear Flora," replied Violet; "are we not as sisters? and more I have not done for you than I should do for a sister, or than you would have done for me, had I been similarly circumstanced. Ah! well do I remember the last time we visited this spot; and well, oh, how well do I recollect the last time we visited it with Wat; there was not a word, a look, a pressure of the hand, I have forgotten; not even a thought that passed through my mind, but I have, with all that transpired, treasured up in my memory."

"And yet you have never spoken of it!" said Flora, with a little surprise.

"Very possibly, dear Flora," she returned; "but I have not the less remembered it. Oh, Flora, Brenchley looks not like Brenchley to me; so much as I have wished to return here, so constantly as I have dwelled upon the hope of once more being in this sweet place. Now that my wishes are realized, and I am here, I am disappointed more than I can express. It is all that I was when we left, yet it wears not the same aspect; it hath no change, for there are still here the same faces as before, but yet it seems dull and dreary. I know not why this is, but so I feel."

"I know why it is," said Flora, instantly; "it is because Wat is not here—because he is not in every place you see, as he used to be; for where did you ever go, save to Tonbridge, that he was not at your side? and it would be better if you had never gone there, for then he would not have seen Sir Walter Manny, and have gone for a soldier."

"We have too great reason to be thankful for Sir Walter's presence, to look upon it as an evil," interrupted Violet.

"Oh, yes," said Flora, "I know he did a great deal of good, and I believe he was a fine, noble fellow, as I know he was a handsome one; still, for all that, I should have been more pleased if he had not taken Michael with him, that is—oh! Violet, if he had never brought the young Earl of Tonbridge, Michael and I should never have parted, for I should not have been so weak as I have been, and never shall be again."

"It is all passed, Flora," said Violet; "let us not talk of that more."

"You ever say that, Violet," exclaimed Flora; "when I speak of my faults ever try to soften them down, and make me think I am not half so guilty as I can see too well I really am. Ah! I have been punished only as I deserved, while you have had griefs and sorrowful occurrences pressed upon you, and deserved nothing but supreme happiness. How dearly I wish I could have the power to lay hands upon Wat, wherever he is, and pop him down here before you. I never before wished to be a sorceress, but I should like now, if it was only for that one thing."

"And to lay hands on Michael too," said Violet, with a smile.

"Why yes, if I could get them both together," she replied—"which I have no doubt I should, for where Wat Tyler is Michael is sure to be—I should certainly bring them both away; but if I could only bring one, I hope you will believe I speak the truth when I tell you I would choose Wat, for indeed—indeed, dear Violet, your happiness is dearer to me than my own."

"I have no doubt of it, Flora," said Violet, pressing her hand.

"Do you know I have often thought," said Flora, suddenly, "whether either Michael or Wat have, during their travels, ever met with any maidens that they could like and love better than you and I. It has been rather a disagreeable surmise, I confess, and I never liked to think much about it, or to talk to you about it, for fear you should say that it was very probable. While we were at Taynetone, at Hartulf's, there often used to come in to chat, the father of Blanche Fell, the brother of Fell who was once a swineherd to your father. You know he had been a great traveller all over Germany and France; well, he used to tell us marvellous tales of all he had seen, and among other things, he said all the young maidens were so very, very lovely—every one of them far more lovely than the loveliest dame in England—and that they were very fond of English youths—particularly fond of them—and for ever falling in love with them, wherever and whenever they saw them, and had some peculiarly enchanting way with them to make the youth love them in return, and then they snapped them up, and went to some beautiful spot that nobody had never seen the like, and where nobody but their two selves could go, all trees, and flowers, and lakes, and sunshine, the most delightful spots on earth, and there they kept them all to themselves, and lived until they grew very old, and then they died; but all this time nobody ever heard of them, nor were they ever heard of more after they had once been carried off. Suppose one of the beauties have singled out Michael, snapped him up, and fled with him, never to let him come back again! I don't know what I should do, Violet, if I thought it was so. If I could find out where they have gone, I would leave England in search of them, and never rest until I had found them, and then I would tell Michael how I had left everything behind me, home, country, and all, for his sake; and I would tell him how we had been little children together, how very fond we had always been of each other, and if we had quarrelled it was only because we loved each other so much—I am sure I did him—and I would ask him to remember how many happy years we had passed together; and if he told me that I had teazed and pained him by my lightness, I would go upon my knees, and call Heaven to witness it was but the overflow of spirits in a thoughtless girl, who knew not the value of what she was trifling with, and did it but for sport, that she might see him a little out of temper, so that she might throw her arms round his neck and kiss him into a good humour again; I would tell him all I had suffered since his departure, all I had thought about him; I would make him remember this little village, the old friends—simple, but sincere ones—that would

welcome him home again; I would speak to him of his dear mother, who says she shall not die happy if she does not once more fold him to her heart; I would say to him, as you have said to me, that Brenchly is not Brenchley to me without him; and I would entreat him to believe that though I might be more homely, and more simple, and not by many degrees so beautiful as she who had beguiled him from me, I loved him more dearly than she could, that I had loved him longer—for I have from childhood, and, indeed, I have—for many times when I have taunted and teazed him, I could have hugged him to my heart, even though he was frowning, and biting his lips, and looking so cross at me. Ah! Violet, I never, never, cared for one lad in the village anything compared to Michael."

"That I well believe," said Violet, who listened patiently, even amused by her singular conceptions, and glad of an opportunity of keeping her spirits from sinking so low she could not bear up against them.

"No, indeed," she continued, "there is not one of them can say I ever showed them the slightest attention, or acted in any way to make them believe I cared a rush for them when he was not by. No, when any one of them tried to speak lovingly to me when he was away, I silenced them instantly, and would never remain near them one moment. Even young Hermann Hardmann—who vowed and swore he was dying in love with me, and with whom I would laugh and joke, and dance with, and give my hand to, seemingly in preference to Michael, to be led out to dance before Michael—never received, when dear Michael was absent, one token that I cared for him more than I did for his father. Once he caught me alone, returning from a merry meeting at old Cedric's, when his daughter Awina was wedded. You must remember it, Violet, for you were there?"

"I do—I remember being angry with you, Flora, for your behaviour to Michael," said Violet; "and I recollect Wat said to me—you will not be offended—that you were unworthy the love of so rich and kind a heart as his."

"Wat said no more than I deserved," replied Flora, "but I will tell you what made me act so. I went there with every disposition to be as kind and attentive to Michael as he could desire. There were some little acts of kindness he had done for my parents that made me love him more than ever, and I resolved that he should not have the slightest cause of complaint. I was in very high spirits, for he saw my desire to please him, and appeared so very delighted that it made me happy to see him so; I danced only with him, I laughed and talked only with him, and felt then that I loved nobody but him; and as I looked round the room, I thought there was nobody in the room like him—no, not even Wat, although he was thought the king of the village youths in person as in everything else. Ah, you may smile, Violet, and of course have not the same opinion, I know—but that's natural. Well, I thought to myself, he loves me; there's not a girl in this room he loves so well as me—no, not in the village, and I know there are a great many who would be glad to get him, and I smiled to myself with triumph, and my heart glowed with the thought. At that moment my eye caught that of Hermann Hardmann's; he was staring and laughing at me, and I declare to you, as true as I sit here, I did not see him, or know he was looking at me, until that moment, and I instantly turned my eyes away and looked at Michael. He saw me look, fancied I was beginning to coquet with Hermann, and a change passed over his face; he began to grow serious and cross, and say unkind things, and I knew I did not deserve it, and I began to grow cross too, and would have begun to tease him, but I remembered what I had made up my mind to do, and desisted; and as he found I did not turn my head any more to Hermann, and declined to dance with him when he asked me, and still had all my words and smiles for him, he came round again, his brow cleared up, and we were as happy as could be, until, at length, Wat suddenly called him to say something, and the moment he was gone Hermann approached me and began to talk. I did not like his talking to me, but I could not help it—I could not drive him away. He began to tell me a droll story about Gerard Blumenbell, who believed every maiden in the village was in love with him, and made love to every one; he fancied, one night, he was saying very sweet things in the dark to a young girl, and a light being brought, he found he had been making love to his own grandmother. It was a plan concocted between a quantity of the village youths to shame him. Hermann told this story so funnily, and it tickled my fancy so much, that I laughed until the tears came into my eyes, and in the midst of my mirth Michael returned to my side. Of course, nothing would persuade him but that I was coquetting with Hermann, and he said immediately, loud enough for Hermann to hear—and he did hear it and laugh too—'I did not come here to be made a fool of by you, Flora, nor will I; and if you have made up your mind to make me a laughing stock for every grinning idiot near you, I shall not stop with you, nor hinder you from bestowing your smiles, caresses perhaps, upon the many fellows here you seem to like so much better than me.' Those were his words; I shall never forget them, they were so unkind, so very unkind—were they not?"

"They were very hasty," replied Violet.

"And unkind, too; they seemed for a moment to stun me," she continued; "but I shook it off and determined to spite him. My heart was ready to break, but I broke out into an unmeaning laugh, and told him there was no need to make him a greater laughing-stock than he was already; and then I turned my back to him, and said to Hermann that I would dance the next dance with him if he pleased; he said yes, with the greatest pleasure, and I thought Michael would have bit him, he looked so viciously at him. However, I heeded him not; I laughed at everything—at nothing; I talked loud, and danced with everybody who asked me, although Hermann tried to keep me by his side; but, offended as I was with Michael, I would not do this. I smiled, and chatted, and looked pleased at whatever was said, although I scarcely heard a word, and my heart was aching all the time most painfully. I looked at you, but you looked gravely at me and turned away; Wat actually frowned at me; and poor Michael looked as white as a ghost, and tried with a most solemn countenance to be merry and lively, and flirt with the maidens there, and all the while his eyes were glaring upon me as if they were on fire; but I was very much vexed, my pride was hurt, and I was reckless of all that took place. I knew I was making Michael writhe with agony, and the gratification of that revengeful feeling supported me throughout the evening. Ah! how have I been punished for it, and how thoroughly cured of that mistaken notion of making myself almost criminal to spite a lover who had vexed me. You left early, and I thought that meeting would never break up, and if it had not when it did, I should have fallen on the floor in a fainting fit: I felt it stealing over me, my dress appeared

dreadfully tight to me, my ears sung, I grew dizzy, and at that moment they all broke up. I ran out, without waiting to part with any one; and when I had run a short distance, I stopped to give way to the torrent of tears that had forced their way into my eyes; I cried ready to break my heart. Just after I had stopped, Hermann Hardmann came up and tapped me on the shoulder; I tried hastily to conceal my tears, and the darkness favoured me. 'I saw you slip away,' he said, 'and I would have run after you immediately, but I was obliged to stop and bid one or two good night, and then I scampered after you; I am glad I caught you. I saw you stop, and I made sure of catching you. What made you stop?' 'I did not stop for you,' I replied, quickly. 'Perhaps it was for Michael,' he replied, ironically. 'It was not for you, whoever it was,' I answered, 'and you will, therefore, oblige me by instantly leaving me.' 'I will see you home,' he said. 'You shall not,' I replied; 'I want no one to see me home; I know my way, and there is nobody will harm me.' 'The marauders are out,' he said. 'It matters not,' I returned; 'you have not the courage to defend yourself, much less protect me.' 'Do not be so scornful to me,' he cried; 'I am very fond of you, and I think you like me a little.' 'You are very much mistaken,' I answered, 'for I dislike you considerably.' 'You don't think so always,' he said. 'Yes I do,' was my reply, 'but it is convenient to make a fool of you at times.' He laughed, and said I was very severe, and still wished to walk home with me. 'No,' I said, 'I have told you I will walk home alone, and I will; your company is disagreeable to me—leave me,' but he would not, and tried to put his arm round my waist, but I broke from him, and told him that unless he quitted me immediately he should suffer for it, for I would have him soundly cudgelled; he said, 'he supposed I would hire Michael to attempt it.' I turned from him with disgust—I did not attempt to conceal it. Again he threw himself before me, and told me he loved me most distractedly, and would marry me to-morrow; he said I knew that he was well to do, and could give me a comfortable home, and would always do everything in his power to make me happy, and never say one word half so unkind as those Michael had said to me that evening. I caught him up hastily, and told him Michael had a right to say what he pleased; it was nothing whatever to him, and that I would not marry him if he was king of the whole world, and had Canterbury cathedral for a palace; but he still urged me to have him, and I refused and grew more angry than ever. I tried to pass, and he would not let me; and at last, after repeatedly saying no, and telling him that I hated him, he seized suddenly hold of me, and swore a dreadful oath that he would make me glad to become his wife. I struggled to escape from him; I screamed with all my strength, but you know being near the wood it was very lonely. I shrieked as loud as my voice would let me, in the hope I should be heard, and I was heard—just as I was growing exhausted, Wat ran up."

"Wat!" exclaimed Violet, with surprise.

"Yes," returned Flora, with a smile, "Wat; and in a moment he rescued me, and gave Hermann such a terrible beating—for Hermann fought desperately—that he made him insensible. However, I did not stay to see the conflict; I ran home at the top of my speed, and when I got into my room, I fastened the door, staggered to the bed, and fainted—there I remained until daylight."

"I never heard this before," cried Violet.

"No," said Flora, "for when I was somewhat recovered, and had had a good cry, I went to Wat and begged of him not to say a word. I told him all the truth, as I have you, and he promised he would not mention it to any one, but told me that he thought very ill of me, until I explained the whole affair to him. I then heard what had been Hermann's punishment; after beating him soundly, Wat carried him home, and knocking at the door, left him. Hermann never disclosed who had thrashed him—he said it was robbers. While he was very ill, he sent for me, and I refused to go; but he sent two or three very pressing messages, and I told Michael: he advised me to go. I went, and then Hermann begged my pardon for all that had passed, said he must have been mad at the time, and if I would not mention the occurrence to any one—if I had not already, and he thought I had not, or he should have heard of it before—he would take it as a great kindness, never insult me even by a look again, and would never say that his terrible punishment was received from Wat. He looked so ill, so miserable, and woe-begone, that I had not the heart to refuse him; I therefore consented. Besides, I did not wish it known, because I knew everybody would say it served me right—so it did; and so it passed over. I never told you or Michael, and Wat too, it seems, kept his word."

"He is the soul of truth," exclaimed Violet, fervently.

"He is a noble fellow," cried Flora. "I remember he never said a word about his generous act of saving me, and only gave me very kind advice regarding my behaviour to Michael, for I confessed to him that I loved him; but I was foolish enough not to follow it. However, if I was light and coquettish before Michael, I was never so behind his back; if he was not by, there was not one of those I laughed and chatted with before him, that ever received more than common civility from me; and I think if one of these foreign maidens had beguiled him, and I was to discover him, and appeal to him, making him remember all that he had left behind, he would leave her and come back with me, never more to quit this dear place. Ah, Violet! if both he and Wat should have been enticed in the way Fell speaks of by some grand foreign princesses—for Fell says they are nearly all princesses there—we could never live here moping, could we? No; we would go together to those foreign lands, and would have good hearts, and perseverance, until we had found them out; and I am sure as soon as they saw us they would think of home, and leave all their new friends to be once more among us—wouldn't they?"

"I am fearful, dear Flora," said Violet, "that Fell did not quite keep to the truth in reciting the marvels of his travels; but even if he had, and either Wat or Michael had met with these beautiful damsels, and forgetting those they had left behind, had wedded them—"

"Oh, he says they do not wed in that land," interrupted Flora, with simplicity.

"He does not speak the truth," observed Violet; "but, at all events, if they could so easily forget us, with whom they were reared, and who, as they well knew, loved them, for the sake of a new friend, with a face however lovely, they would not be worth following. Much as it would pain me, I would say, let them go, nor move one inch to bring them back. Those who love truly, and know that they are beloved again, never turn away from those who hold their heart, even in thought. Those who are incapable of loving with steadfastness and truth, may find in new scenes and new forms, charms which may make them change; but though I had given my love to one, such as this,

irrecoverably, I would not give him my hand. I should find it easier and better to combat with my passion, than I should to be patiently the victim of his caprice and inconstancy; and, dearly as I love Wat, I would renounce for ever all hopes of being united to him—would not, although he prayed and entreated upon his knees to grant him my hand, if I thought him capable of a weakness so great as the one you have surmised."

"And you would never love him any more?" asked Flora, thoughtfully.

"I do not say I could cast him from my heart at once," replied Violet; "it seems almost impossible that I could do so at all. But even though I loved him as much after such a discovery as now I do, I would yet have strength of mind not to wed him: he should be free to rove where he pleased, to lavish his love—such love as it would be—upon all who caught his fancy. I would not reproach him, if we met ever afterwards. I would not suffer myself to repine, whatever the struggle cost me, for his loss. I have worn him in my heart as I have no other, not even my beloved parents; I have had no thought, no wish for any other than him; I have cherished his memory as I have my religion; I have thought of him when I should have thought of Heaven; through every change and trial, the memory of him has supported me when otherwise I should have been sunk down in the lowest depths of despondency. No thought of titles, honors, aggrandisement, could turn my heart from him one instant. No! were an emperor to lay his crown at my feet, and to his high station were added all the charms of a very noble person and polished mind, seeking me for his bride, I would turn to my own dear Wat, and fling my arms about his neck and have him, though he was poorer than the poorest peasant in England. Thus have I thought of him, and so true as such thoughts could make me, would I be to him—having no eyes or thoughts for other than him; and think you, Flora, possessing such a love for him, I could bear even to be first in a heart that was liable, under the influence of fresh and fair faces, to be turned from me at a moment? No! I should regret that my love had been obtained, ere I knew the nature of him who had gained it; but I would rather die inch by inch, the victim of disappointed hopes, than have such love as I bear Wat Tyler slighted, sported with, made a toy and a trifle, to be thrown aside or taken up at will. I love with my whole heart—my soul, my spirit, my nature, are all invested in that one venture; I must have an equal return, or sacrifice the whole; I know of no medium—it must be an equal love to mine, or none at all. But well I know the nature of Wat; he is as true as truth itself: honor is so engrafted in his soul he must die ere part with it. I know that he loves me deeply and dearly, and I feel as satisfied of his constancy and faith as that I now exist; and were we to be separated for years, never to meet till we had both grown old, I am convinced to the greatest certainty that fact itself can establish, that he will wear me in his heart as I do him in mine; and though he might be kind and gentle to all—never suffer another, however fair and lovely, to occupy the place I held there."

"And I think so too," said Flora, musingly, "for he was like nobody else that ever I saw; full of life and spirit, yet, with it somehow, there was a distance nobody could exactly break through. He was always thought more of than any one else in the village, and nobody knew why. There were others in better circumstances than he, but nothing to be compared to him; he excelled every youth in person, in manner, in courage, in accomplishments, in everything; he was almost a man at fourteen, quite one at sixteen, and what must he be now that he is fast approaching two-and-twenty? quite a tall, noble, handsome warrior; finer than even Sir Walter Manny, and he was a gallant, handsome fellow—wasn't he, Violet?"

"The handsomest and noblest of his class I ever saw," replied Violet, "and, I believe, the most generous, the most honorable, and the bravest."

"Do you know, Violet, I once thought that you were rather in love with Sir Walter Manny?" exclaimed Flora, smiling.

"You were not the only one that entertained such an idea," replied Violet; "but what led you to think so?"

"Oh, I don't know, hardly," she replied; "he rescued you from the robbers, risking his life for you, and you seemed so very grateful to him for it afterwards."

"And should I not have been?" asked Violet, with a little surprise.

"Yes; but I mean you were so very, very grateful," returned Flora, archly; "and then you seemed so thoughtful, and so dull, and you so often looked at him with such a soft gaze, just as if you had set your heart upon him; and when the first night I saw him I mentioned him to Michael before Wat, you colored and quite trembled, so that I set it down in my own mind that I had all along been mistaken, and instead of loving Wat you loved Sir Walter Manny."

"You were mistaken," observed Violet, with a faint smile. "I had good cause for the emotion I that night felt; but love for Sir Walter Manny was not the cause."

"Ah, but I know he loved you as dearly as Wat did," she said, emphatically; "I could see that easily—anybody might have seen that, and I have often thought if anything occurred to Wat, you would marry him."

"Sir Walter Manny gave me every reason to believe that he loved me," said Violet, dropping her eyes to the ground, as she encountered Flora's eager look the moment she uttered the words; "but I gave him no hope, and he acted most nobly towards me when he discovered I had given my heart to Wat. No word was spoken: a look, a slight act undeceived him from any hopes he might have entertained, and generous and high-souled as he was, he forbore from that instant to shew by the slightest deed, look, or sentence, that he regarded me more than as a brother, or did aught to pain me, or make me regret that I must withhold my heart from him. I honor and esteem him; I have kind thoughts for him; but though there is no man in the universe I hold higher as a friend than him, I shall never, under any circumstances, be united to him."

"Why not?" asked Flora. "Suppose—which God forbid!—you should hear that Wat had perished in the field of battle a year or two since, and Sir Walter was to return, loving you as dearly as he did before he quitted England, and were to offer you his hand—do you mean that you would refuse him?"

"I do," replied Violet, decisively.

"But why?" inquired Flora.

"Because my first love shall be my last," she returned calmly, yet energetically. "Wat Tyler shall be my husband alone; if he is dead, none other shall find a wife in me; and were we wedded, and it pleased Heaven to take him from me, his memory should not be disturbed by the brightest or best that ever lived—even Sir Walter Manny. As Wat, dear Wat's wife will I live, as his wife will I die; he was my first love on earth, he shall be my last there too; and it is

my earnest prayer that we may meet in Heaven, never to part again."

"I pray most earnestly to Heaven you may have your fondest wishes realised," said Flora, fervently. "I have no doubt you will, for you have always been so very good; and I trust I may too, though I do not deserve them as well as you do. I hope Michael holds me in his heart as Wat does you, and I am sure I do him as you do Wat. Oh, Violet, if they should be on their way home now, and had never seen or been beguiled by any of these lovely foreign maidens, but turned their eyes and hearts from their fascinations, and remembered only us, wouldn't it be delightful! I think you may be sure of Wat; and I don't believe Michael would lightly forget me—oh, no, I am sure he wouldn't. I believe they are both the most constant, dearest creatures in the world—don't you? They can't be long before they return home now, can they? Only consider, five years, which is the same as five years and a half, for they only remained in England a few days, and what can they want away all that while? I feel sure, somehow, they are coming home;" here she clapped her hands with delight. "Perhaps they'll be home in a week—perhaps to-morrow! Oh, how delightful; what thousands of things we shall have to talk about, all about our adventures and theirs too. I shall never leave off chattering for a week. Oh, that they would come home to-morrow!"

But Violet had no such hope; she, however, said nothing. Flora, who had some vague notion that coming to Brenchley was more than half-way to seeing Michael, had no sooner hit upon a string of sanguine expectations, than she ran on with her hopes and anticipations, until she almost fancied that when she got back to the cottage she should find Wat and Michael there. They sat there until twilight was merging into night, and then they rose and departed.

On arriving at the cottage, Flora cast her eyes around with a faint idea that her hopes might have been fulfilled; but, alas! neither Wat nor Michael were there, nor any indication that they had arrived, and Flora contented herself with the hope that it might be to-morrow or the next day—a week at farthest, and retired with Violet to rest, to dream that she was once again with her own Michael, walking in the most sequestered, but loveliest spot in all Brenchley.

Violet, on the contrary, rested ill: the necessity for exertion, mental and bodily, had passed away; everything that could call upon her energies no longer existed; and she had nothing now to exercise her thoughts upon but Wat—to conjecture what his situation might be; whether he had found laurels to be had only for the plucking, or whether he found, as many have, the army, the field of glory, a succession of imminent hazards linked to bitter slavery, productive of hardships, wounds—a scanty pittance, and nothing else.

Halbert Evesham had well explained to her the bond which bound the soldier to the King's service, and it was too well known that the more preux and brilliant the soldier, the less his chance of discharge, unless he received it from Death. The position of affairs between England and France rendered it, through Edward's known intention and ambition, a matter of great doubt that the war would terminate for years; and as she was in her own mind satisfied that Wat, aided by the patronage of Sir Walter Manny, would never rest until he had greatly distinguished himself, thereby rendering himself of value to Edward, and his hopes of return in consequence fainter than ever, she could not but arrive at the conclusion that years might yet pass ere they would meet.

And well she could foresee how long and weary suspense would make the time that would elapse ere his arrival; it was in vain that she tried, with resignation and patience, to await it. She felt that, having nothing to occupy her mind, she should be the victim of sorrowful spirits, from which nothing could rouse her but his return. Flora, too, had touched upon a chord which she was herself surprised should have affected her—she could not have believed it would have moved her, but it did; her faith in Wat had been unshaken by a single doubt, but when Flora mentioned Fell's story of the wonders of the continent—although she regarded it as a fable—there was in it an approach to truth which rendered it in a modified degree possible.

As far as her own heart was concerned, no being in the world could interfere with, share, or shake the impression Wat had made upon it; she had hitherto believed that he bore the same feeling of truth; but when Flora's words recurred to her mind—and they did frequently, in spite of every effort to divest herself of them, or laugh at them as absurd—she began to reason upon the difference there might exist between man's nature and woman's, and whether it was possible for the former to possess the same enduring, clinging, unchanging love as the latter. She began to wonder whether, after a separation of five years, engaged in scenes of turmoil and bloodshed, her image might not be in some degree weakened in his mind; and surrounded at the celebration of the victories with high dames, the loveliest imagination could picture, all regarding him with their kindest glances and fairest smiles—for she deemed him so surpassingly gallant in his appearance, that they could not refrain from singling him out to be honored with their favors—whether his mind would not be dazzled by the beauty and the station, and his memory of her who was far, far from him, so nearly effaced by what was before him, as to make him forget all he had sworn to remember, and unite himself with one who might be fairer in person, more cultivated in mind, but who could not possess the same devoted attachment to him that she did. Then would she dismiss it from her mind; and calling up numerous traits of his high principle, cast away the thought that he would tarnish his soul by forfeiting his truth, for the sake of one who, though she might be high in station and lovely in person, to whom he had not sworn to be true and never change. For a time she would revel in all the pleasure such a reflection gave her; but then, again, they would be displaced by a troop of conjectures, giving strong and feasible reasons for its being otherwise; and thus tossed and harrassed by conflicting thoughts, she rose from her bed unrefreshed.

She was very sad that day, and several times, albeit she strove to check the tears, she wept almost bitterly. Flora was very much infected by her sadness to even herself shed tears, but she tried a thousand ways to cheer her. They were seated in the afternoon in the little chamber that partly overlooked the village, and Violet, moved by the affectionate earnestness of Flora to rouse her from her melancholy, told her candidly, that although she had the previous day scouted the idea that Wat might in another land find a fair one to compensate his absence from her, it had appeared so feasible, so likely, and he not so very much to blame, that from his very long silence she dreaded that it had come to pass, and he would never return to England, or if he did, it would be to bring his bride with him instead of coming to find her there.

Flora listened to her with a sort of horror. She turned faint and pale, and, leaving her chair, knelt before Violet, and looking up in her face, said, with a troubled expression of countenance—

"But surely, Violet, you do not really think so?"

"I wish, dear Flora, I did not," she replied.

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Flora, bursting into tears, and burying her face in Violet's lap, "then all my hopes are vanished for ever."

"Thine!" exclaimed Violet. "Why thine, Flora? the change in Wat cannot affect thee."

"Oh, yes, indeed, it does most terribly," she sobbed. "Oh, if you knew as I do how devotedly Michael is attached to Wat; I have heard him, with tears in his eyes, vow he would gladly die to serve him, and I know if Wat cannot stand against the temptation, Michael will be sure to fall. He will be sure to follow Wat's example and come to England with his bride too. Oh, I wish I had never heard Fell's diabolical tales. I wish my tongue had been cut out ere I had mentioned them to you; for all my stay, my dependance, was on what you said; and now you conjecture the worst, what can I do but give myself up to despair. Oh, Violet, I shall be so unhappy now. I—I shall—oh, how I wish there—there—were no—no—maidens any—any—where—but—but in—Bre—Bre—Brenchley," she concluded, sobbing ready to break her heart.

"Nay, dear Flora, be not too ready to give way to such violent grief before you have something stronger than a mere conjecture of mine to found your sorrow upon," said Violet, cheeringly. "Michael may be very much attached to Wat, but not to the extent of sacrificing you, because Wat was to wed other than me."

"Ah!" exclaimed Flora, "I know Michael better; he could not be proof against a temptation Wat could not withstand; perhaps he is already married to some designing, artful, wicked creature, who may be very beautiful, but must be very cunning, and had no right whatever to marry Michael. And as for him, he—but no, I don't think he would—I don't think he would wed another, and so quickly forget me. I would rather hear he was dead, much rather; for then I should know that if I did not have him nobody else would. Perhaps he is dead—perhaps he is, and that accounts for his long absence. Oh, Violet, if they should both be dead!"

As this was a matter that, under the circumstances, was highly probable, and as it was to Violet more grievous than even the thoughts of his wedding a foreign dame, it proved anything but consolatory in her state of mind; and burying her face in her hand, she leaned her arm upon the window-ledge, and gave way to a passion of tears. To see her so very sorrowful smote the heart of Flora, as if an arrow had been thrust there, and she raised her head again, and, with the kindest words she could employ, sought to alleviate her grief, but Violet was unable to easily recover from her ruth, and Flora was at a loss in what manner to remove her tears. She happened in a moment of silence to cast her eyes down the village, and suddenly she opened them to their widest extent, her heart beat to suffocation—she half shrieked, and pointing out of the window, she cried—

"Violet! Oh, Violet, look there! look there! for Heaven's sake, look!—my eyes do not deceive me, do they? See! see!—it must be them! Oh, Holy Virgin be praised!"

Violet raised her eyes, startled by Flora's sudden exclamation, and looking in the direction in which Flora pointed, saw a couple of men in military garb, mounted upon war steeds, galloping towards them at the top of their speed; they were yet some distance, and the features, or even character of them, could not be distinguished; but there was something so remarkable in the coincidence of their appearance at this moment, that Violet was infected with the same belief as Flora, and her heart beat so violently as to be painful.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Flora, clapping her hands, and waving them out of the window in a paroxysm of intense delight. "It is them!—it is Wat and Michael!—it is Michael! I could tell him anywhere. Ha! ha! ha! he sees us, Violet—he waves his hand. Dear, dear Michael! and he has not wedded a foreign maiden, and gone away with her; I love him, if its only for that. How they gallop along. Oh yes, Violet, it is—I see their faces—it is them. Oh, Heaven be praised! there 's Michael, he laughs and knows me. I can't see him now for tears, but I know it is him—my heart tells me so. Oh, Violet, let us run out and meet them; come, let us run and show them how glad, how delighted, how overjoyed—oh, there 's no word to express it. Violet, how white you look. Come, Violet, come, dear Violet! Why are you so pale, and your hand so cold?—it is like ice. Speak to me—you must not faint, there 's a dear, sweet Violet! Come, come, think how happy, how very happy we shall be now. Sit down a moment, you will be better in a minute. Oh, when Wat folds you to his heart you will soon have your colour restored. There! there! Oh, Violet, they have come at last! Hark! they have reached the door—the horses stop! Oh dear, oh dear, how my heart does beat! I feel cold, too, Violet, and my eyes are dim—but I will not faint. No, no, I will not welcome my own dear Michael by fainting in his arms."

But the poor girl was so overcome by her feelings that she trembled and tottered, and with the greatest exertion could barely keep herself from fainting. Violet, too, was on the verge of swooning; she was as white as marble, and sat almost in a state of stupor, with her hands clasped awaiting his coming. They heard the commotion at the door—they heard the voices—oh, how well they knew their every tone! They heard a voice exclaim, "Where's Flora?"

"Here, dear Michael, here! here! here!" she shrieked, and darting from the room, was in another instant clasped to his heart, doing the very thing she had resolved not to do, welcoming him by fainting dead away in his arms; if Michael's squeezing her passionately to his breast had been a successful remedy for her recovery, she would have speedily been restored, for he strained her to his heart, and the large tears ran down his cheeks, rendering him incapable of utterance beyond the ejaculation of—

"Flora! Flora! my own dear, dear little Flora!"

He kissed her cheeks again and again as she lay motionless in his arms; and it was plain to see his hot tears shining on her face. His mother advanced to take her from his arms, but he would not suffer her, and waving her off, he carried Flora into the garden. He seated himself upon a small bench with her in his arms, and hung over her, waiting patiently for the opening of her sweet eyes.

Wat, who found some difficulty in disengaging himself from his mother's arms, was so sooner free than he made for the room in which Violet was sitting; he opened the door gently, and entered with a beating heart: he saw her sitting there deathly pale, like a statue, watching for his entrance. He no sooner appeared before her than she uttered a cry of joy hysterically, and sprung into his extended arms; he pressed her to his heart with a feeling of happiness so

intense, it was scarcely possible to endure it, and he kissed her sweet face and hands, and knew not how to show his extreme felicity in once more holding her in his arms.

"Violet, my love!" he exclaimed, when his emotion enabled him to articulate, "this is joy!—this, indeed, is supreme felicity, and a bright reward for all my toil—for my long, long separation from you. Ah, Violet, how constant have been my thoughts of you! —how unceasing my prayers for you! I have worn you in my heart as a tutelary saint, and never found one to move my soul from thee, my beloved; never!"

"Dear Wat!" murmured Violet, "I do believe thee. I know that thou'rt all truth and honor, and in all things worthy of my dearest love; and I have always thought thus of thee while thou wert away, and have been true to thee in all things, never meeting with a time when I had a look, or word, or thought for other than you."

"Thou true!" ejaculated Wat, enthusiastically; "why, my beloved Violet, I could have easier doubted the truth of my religion, than thought, even in imagination, thou wert untrue. Oh, Violet, how I have longed for this moment to arrive! how have I wearied myself with conjectures and anticipations to foresee the hour when this bliss should come to pass! and it used to make me sad and dull to think how far off the time must necessarily be; but it has arrived, and once more, after an absence of five long years, which, 'mid all the toil, turmoil, and bustle of war, and a camp life, have each appeared an age—I have come back to you, Violet, with a heart as clear and as devoted to you, with a conscience as unstained or a deed upon it to raise a blush, as before I quitted you. I have not quitted the army as I entered it; for I went in as a simple village youth, who had nothing but his good sword to speak for him, and I have quitted it as honorably as I could have wished. I have won honors, I have gained laurels, and bear tokens of our good and gallant King Edward's esteem with me; and I have succeeded in my proud ambition of making my name of Wat Tyler one which the peerless Violet Evesham may never be ashamed to wear."

"Oh, Wat! had you never quitted this village," said Violet, turning her eyes fondly upon his, "I should have been but too happy to have borne your name; but now, for thy sake, I am prouder than ever to share thy honors, thy fame, but most of all, dearest Wat, thy love!"

"My beloved Violet!" ejaculated Wat.

"When you quitted me, dear Wat," continued Violet, "there were many doubts and fears which harassed and haunted me constantly. I loved you, Wat—I knew not until we were separated how dearly—but the incertitude I was in respecting my parents, the mystery connected with my birth, made me have some sorrowful apprehensions whether Heaven would be so bountiful as to grant our union. I had resolved—and weak as I am in many things, I could be immoveable on this point—that if I wedded not you, none other should be my husband. I had some strange forebodings that when I discovered my parents they would wish me to marry one of their own selection. I know not why this thought possessed me; I had no cause, but it clung like a shadow to me, and rendered me more dispirited than any other circumstance in my position. I several times mentioned this apprehension to my dear father, and with the same devoted affection he had ever shewn me, he told me, that if they wished arbitrarily to control my will to the sacrifice of my happiness, there was still his roof and arms open to shelter me as of old, and to them I would have flown, dear, dear Wat, rather than have wounded your heart for ever by any consideration of personal aggrandizement; but all is cleared up, all the mystery is removed, and I am really the daughter of Halbert, and Ghita is my mother, my beloved mother. Oh, Wat! I have such a treasure in her; so good she is, so sweet and mild in her temper, and loves me so very dearly, that she would almost weep if I had a nerve that ached. She has heard of you, Wat; oh, we have had such delightful talk about you—your mother and I, too, Wat. We have told her what you were before you left, and what she might expect to find you on your return, and she will not be disappointed. Oh, will she not be proud of you as her son; will she not be happy to see you look up to her with the same fond affection that you do to your own mother. Ah, Wat, you will find she is a being no less to love than your own parent."

"I am sure of that," said Wat; "I saw her as I entered. I heard Halbert say, 'this is my dear wife,' and a glance told me the being I am sure she is. But, Violet, I could think of none but you when I came into this dear old place again—even when I hugged my mother to my heart, bless her! I looked round for you, and wondered why you were not there to greet me."

"I saw you coming, Wat—Flora's quick eyes detected you and Michael, when your forms were scarce distinguishable, and she pointed you out to me, but my heart was so overcome with emotion, I had not power to move," replied she.

"I can have little doubt of it, dear Violet, judging by my own feelings," returned Wat, fervently. "My steed, which is very swift, seemed as we approached the village to be in his very laziest mood, and little as I am used to vex him with whip and spur, I used both to urge him on, and even then he kept not pace with my inclinations; albeit, when we reached here, he was covered with foam, and I know his mettle and capabilities so well, that that simple fact convinces me we must have ridden hither furiously. Poor Michael was in a more impatient condition than myself; he vowed that the steeds crawled miserably —that they did it purposely, because they were well aware their best speed was never so much needed, and wondered by what freak of Nature they were not gifted with wings, that, upon extraordinary occasions like the present, they might fly direct to their destination at once, instead of being compelled to keep on the road, and follow every winding and turning it took. Never was human being so anxious to return to their birth-place as he, and never was satisfaction so complete, as when he learned that he had obtained his discharge from the army, although there was no braver man, no gallanter, or better soldier in the camp than he. He is a noble, affectionate soul, and I should regret most sincerely if the cause of his anxiety to return should induce him to seek in the turmoil of war the happiness he expects to find here."

"Meaning Flora," said Violet, with a smile.

"Yes," replied Wat. "No youth can love a maiden more sincerely, more devotedly, I might say, more passionately, than he does her. She has been his only thought, his anxiety, his dream by night, his memory by day; and if she now deceives him—if ever man died of a broken heart, Michael Rycheart will be the man."

"Do you remember, dear Wat, before you left Brenchley, in speaking of Flora's situation, what you said?" asked Violet, still smiling.

"I recollect well what my thoughts were upon the

subject," he replied, "and what they have been ever since; but what I said I cannot now call to mind."

"Ah; there was little you said then which I did not treasure in my memory," exclaimed Violet.

Wat pressed her to his heart for the kind acknowledgment.

"You said," she continued, "that if you were successful in persuading him to return, that I should see Flora would be cured of her flirtation."

"I was not successful in bringing him back," said Wat, eagerly; "but what was the consequences?"

"That your judgment was infallible," replied Violet, "she was so thoroughly cured of her frivolity, that not even the most jealous lover on earth could have found cause to quarrel with her; and I am certain that Michael's hopes and anticipations could not excel hers for him, even if they could equal them. She has explained in so artless a manner, that there could be no disguise or deceit in her story, the motives and influences for her conduct; and, with such a nature as hers, I am not at all surprised at what occurred. Michael, in some degree, had himself to blame for much that happened; but I think they have both had a lesson which will teach them to be happier for the future."

"And there exists nothing that should prevent him taking her to his heart as gladly as he did ere they quarrelled?" exclaimed Wat.

"Nothing on earth," replied Violet, energetically; "she is in every way worthy of him; and never did I think until lately he might be so proud of her as he may now."

"There is one doubt from my heart removed," said Wat, gladly; "there is one piece of happiness I have gained in coming to Brenchley. I confess I had my misgivings, and for Michael's sake I dreaded to hear some unpleasant story respecting her, but your intelligence has made my heart rejoice. My kind-hearted, sincere Michael!" he exclaimed with a fervent aspiration, "may you be as happy as you deserve to be!"

"I hope so too," said Violet, "and I think there is little cause to fear that he will, for I am indeed deceived in Flora if she does not try her utmost to banish every care, pain, or anxiety from him. You said he had obtained his discharge from the army, dear Wat; does that mean an entire release, or a leave of absence for a term?"

"An entire release," replied Wat; "he is free of the army for ever if he pleases; and such is the nature of the document, that, unless by his own free will, he cannot under any circumstances be compelled to enter the army again. Edward can ill spare such gallant soldiers as him, but in consideration of many services, he has bestowed it upon him instead of rewarding him with promotion."

"And—and—have you such a discharge?" inquired Violet, timidly yet anxiously, fearing an answer in the negative.

"Would you have me quit the army, and forego all further chance of promotion and honours?" asked Wat.

"I would have honors showered upon you tenfold, aye, a millionfold," said she earnestly; "but not at the expense of absence from me, and the hazard of your life. Ah, Wat! I could ill bear to be again separated from you as I have been; you have served your country for nearly six years, I am sure, through all danger and hardships, and that is surely long enough. You tell me you have not left it as you entered. Ah! I know that well—very well; your noble nature assures me of that: you have won honors—you have gained laurels—you bear the tokens of the King's esteem, and have made the name of Wat Tyler one to be proudly remembered. You cannot do more were you to continue in it all your life. Your station might be raised; you might be made an earl, a duke, but you could not gain more brilliant fame from your achievements than you have obtained; you could not, at least I hope and think not, be happier than were you to leave the perils of the field and live in Brenchley for the remainder of your days. You are of my opinion, Wat, I perceive by the expression of your eyes. You, too, have a discharge as complete as Michael's — have you not? Your services to Edward could be no less then Michael's, and he would not, I am sure, withhold from you that which he would grant to him. You have got an entire release, have you not? Tell me, for I cannot bear the suspense of doubting whether a short time may not again part us, and perhaps for ever."

"I have got a release as entire in all its conditions as Michael's," replied Wat.

"Thank Heaven!" responded Violet, energetically.

"But if I return to the army I shall be presented with a pair of spurs, and be dubbed Sir Walter Tyler," exclaimed Wat, "whereas I am now but a simple esquire."

"Better that by far, dear Wat," said Violet, quickly, "than you should return to the wars and perish for the sake of being made a knight."

"You have no ambition, Violet," said Wat, with a smile.

"Indeed I have," she replied.

"You have!" he exclaimed; "what is it?"

"To be happy," she returned; "I esteem it better to be happy than to be great, as I do to be good rather than powerful. In seeking for greater fame than you have gained, in striving to be more exalted than you are, you will not be happier than now, perhaps not so happy, and you may, in seeking for empty titles, sacrifice the happiness of others; and if you desire to do this, you are changed from what you were."

"And you would not have me quit you again, dear Violet?" he said, fondly, although he smiled at the earnestness with which she uttered her last speech.

"No, Wat, unless you really desired it; and then, if you could be happier in being away, I would not prevent you, although it would —"

She did not finish her sentence, and Wat would not pain her farther by dwelling on the subject; and imprinting a kiss upon her forehead, he said, in a gentle voice,—

"And now that all the mystery of your birth is cleared up—a story I long to hear—there exists no bar or impediment to our happiness, sweet Violet; Halbert, who would not have controlled your inclination before he knew that you were his child, will not now discover that Wat Tyler is no meet match for thee."

"Indeed he will not," said Violet, leaning her head upon his shoulder, and turning her sweet eyes with a soft gaze upon his.

"Nor Ghita, thy newly found mother, think you, would be happier if you wedded with one of higher birth and greater wealth than I?" he added.

"My happiness is theirs, Wat," she replied; "and in this matter they would not bias my wish in the least degree."

"And you, Violet; you will not say or think you had rather be the bride of one who is in all respects noble, who loves thee devotedly, but who is far from here, were I to ask thy hand of thee?"

"Wat, do you doubt me?" she exclaimed, looking instantly serious, almost painfully so.

"Do not be offended, dearest," he replied; "I

know your generous and kind nature so well, that for me, your old companion, the playmate and lover of your childhood, you would sacrifice everything. But I, too, Violet, can be at least just, and if you had one thought of him, in preference to me, I would not stand in the way of your happiness, but would resign you to him, in the strong hope that your happiness would be perfect."

"If I did not know the generous motive that prompts you to say this—if, indeed, I did not know your heart, Wat, I should think you had spoken the unkindest speech you could utter; but I can see well how beyond all other considerations is your desire for my happiness, and, instead of feeling hurt, I love you more than ever. This is no time to disguise my feelings from you, dear Wat, nor is our connection one in which it should be considered necessary to do so, and therefore I will lay bare my heart to you as I read it—have for years read it myself. I love you, Wat, without the intervention of one other feeling—it is alone, single, unalloyed, most fervent, and most enduring; it has existed since I was conscious of a preference for any one, when we were little children playing in all the happiness that an absence of care, and the knowledge even of what made it, could produce it. I have singled you out from all, and thought, though I said but little, there was none like you in the world. I remember once asking my good confessor—you will smile, perhaps, Wat, at the foolish incident, but it will show you what I thought—whether the angels and cherubims in Heaven, of which he told me such pretty parables, were not like you in heart and disposition; he smiled at my simplicity, but spoke of you very flatteringly, and never did I think the good old man so amiable as at that moment. Thus I continued thinking of you as one who ought to have been my brother—"

"Your brother!" said Wat hastily, yet he smiled, and so did Violet.

"I thought so then," she said, "and continued to think so until Martin du Bois professed love for me; and then, in a moment, how my heart leaped towards you! He offered me wealth and distinction, but I saw nothing but you, thought of nothing but you, would hear of nothing, and hugged the memory of you to my heart. Again a simple circumstance revealed to me the state of Sir Walter Manny's feelings towards me; him, Wat, I esteemed highly; I knew him, handsome in person, noble in birth and mind, honorable in position, brave, generous, gallant, high in favor with his King, the most chivalrous knight in the world, and, though not a countryman by birth, the pride and boast of our army. To me he had been ever gentle, ever respectful, attentive, and acted in all things in such a manner as to win the heart of a maiden with such a disposition as mine. He had saved me from a fate I shudder to remember, at the moment when my danger was most imminent; he defended me at the peril of his life against a number of brutal men; he never said one word respecting the service he had done me, in order that he might be a gainer in my good thoughts of him, and he loved me truly, I believe—"

"He did—most sincerely, most devotedly," said Wat, with flushed cheeks.

"Yet when he found," she continued, "that you had set your heart upon me, and, as I imagine, believed I returned your love, he repressed his feelings, and with the exception of what you heard him utter the morning of his departure from Brenchley, the last time I ever saw him, he never by word or look endeavoured to displace you in my affection, or essay for a heart which he felt might never be his. Here was everything to make me love him; his noble generosity to affect my heart; his person possessing every requisite for manly beauty to delight my eyes; and his honorable position to captivate my imagination. I already possessed his love; a word to you would have made you resign me in his favour, for your generosity equalled his, but with all this, you, Wat, was sovereign of my heart; to him I never felt more than esteem; I thought of him as a friend, one of the highest and best, but not beyond it. No; I turned still to you with my whole heart, even though I deceived myself by indulging in anticipations which were never realised, and never would have been, even though I had perished in resisting the efforts made to separate us for ever. No, dear Wat, I love you as you in your inmost heart can wish me; I have no earthly wish so dear as to be your bride; you are all the world to me, and to you only now do I look for future happiness."

"Beloved Violet," replied Wat, pressing her warmly to his heart, "if it is in the power of man to confer happiness on woman, thy lot shall be one of extreme felicity. In all things will I minister to thy comfort; in all things endeavour to keep from thee sorrow or pain. We will be wedded speedily, and never, my beloved, will I again quit thee."

"Dearest Wat!" ejaculated Violet.

"We have grown up together from infancy," continued Wat, "always loving each other, and so will we perform our pilgrimage through the world, never changing in our affection, or harbouring a thought inimical to each other's happiness; and we will be in old age—if God grant us life so long—what we were in childhood, and smile upon each other as affectionately when our hair is grey, and our strength declines, as we did when we traversed the greenwood in our earliest youth, and had not a thought which could bring a sigh or sad brow. All shall be joy for us henceforward, Violet. We will meet every evil that may rise and turn it aside; we will be happy in spite of fate itself. We have sufficient wealth for all our wants. We are again together in the village where we have spent our happiest hours. We are restored to each other, and there is no impediment to our union, for we love each other, and there is none who will say nay to our wedding; we can be happy together, for thine is not a nature to beget occasion for disagreement."

"Nor thine, dear Wat," said Violet, fondly.

"I will strive that it shall not," he returned; "and we will go on hand in hand until the grave receives us, as happy as mortals can be, and happier than mortals usually are. Oh, Violet, I now feel so happy that my heart pains me, and were it not for very shame at such weakness, I could lay my head on thy shoulder and weep like a child."

"But you must not indulge in such a woman's privilege," said Violet, her eyes glistening at the emotion that she saw shook his frame; "'tis for me to weep at sorrow or happiness, and you to bear it with the firmness with which you would look danger in the face, with the same high bearing which you exhibited on entering the battle field. I have often thought, dear Wat," she continued, in a fond tone, "that I could see you armed to the teeth, mounted upon your proud war steed, waving your bright sword, and with flashing eyes shouting your war cry, galloping into the thickest of the fight, clearing from your path all who opposed you, winning honors and praise at every turn, and by your gallant prowess and example animating the whole army who followed you, looking upon you as the tutelary angel, and accom-

plishing feats and conquests which, but for your noble 'haviour, they would never have achieved."

"Your imagination, as far as I was concerned, was rather overheated, through a kind of disposition in my favour," replied Wat; "but could you have seen some of the fields in which I have been engaged, it would have made your heart leap, as it did mine; the cheers of the soldiers, the loud war-cry, the clashing of weapons, the glitter of them and armour as they flashed in the sun, the neighing of steeds, the waving of banners, the loud shrill blast of the trumpets, the shouts of the victorious, and the cries of the wounded, all formed a scene of excitement of which there is no description that can convey an adequate idea; but these will all form tales for our fireside anon, when the cold dark winter will make the blazing logs look cheerful, and on the long nights we will gather round them, and you shall hear the wonders of war and foreign lands that will make your heart glow to listen to."

"I have heard that the foreign lands possess many charms to Englishmen which equal the wonders," said Violet, with an arch smile.

"You have!" exclaimed Wat, with surprise; "and what are they?"

"No less than maidens lovely as angels, who, finding the youths of England fairer in their eyes than those from any other land, lose no opportunity to find favor in their sight, and succeeding in enchanting them, entice them to some remote spot which is esteemed very beautiful, keep them there as their own in seclusion for the remainder of their lives. Do you know aught of this?" she added, looking in his face with a look that half challenged him with being a victim.

"I did not discover that the maidens of other lands excelled or even equalled our own in beauty," he replied, returning her look with a laugh which showed he understood her meaning; then growing serious, he said,—"Yet there was one maiden, Violet, of whom I have to tell you, who was of another land, who was very lovely and very gentle, who for nearly five years was my constant companion."

"A maiden! lovely!—five years thy constant companion!" echoed Violet, growing immediately serious too. "What mean you?"

"Exactly as I have said," replied he. "When I returned to Brenchley she came with me, and was sadly disappointed that she saw you not.

"Came with thee!" iterated Violet, "thy mother told me none was with thee but Michael and a page."

"That page was the maiden," said Wat.

"What strange story is this?" cried Violet, turning pale. "Pray explain all to me instantly; I feel my heart beat with a sensation as singular as it is painful. A female thy constant companion for five years!" she reiterated. "Who was she? What was she? Where is she now?"

"In Heaven, I trust," said Wat, fervently. "Peace to her gentle soul!"

"Dead?" cried Violet.

"Even so," replied Wat, gravely; "she perished in the very spring of her life, most untimely."

"Do not, Wat, if you love me, keep me in this suspense," exclaimed Violet, agitatedly. "I do not know what to imagine. I have some strange foreboding; yet which, for I have never found thee untrue, I will not entertain—but you speak of one young and fair, who was with thee for a long period, but who, by some unforeseen accident, is dead, as one you loved."

"And I did love her, Violet," said Wat.

"You loved her!" echoed Violet, growing paler still, and suddenly disengaging herself from Wat's arms. "Merciful Heaven! you could not have been so cruel, so unlike yourself, to have deceived me thus; you—"

"Nay, Violet, you have no cause for apprehension," said Wat, gently, and again taking her in his arms; "I loved her but as you would have loved her had you known her, as a sister."

"Wat, I know you are too honorable, too proud to tell me an untruth," said Violet, looking him steadfastly in the face. "Relate the whole of this story to me, nor disguise the slightest portion; think not that I shall judge harshly of you or her, even if there be apparent cause."

"There exists no cause," replied Wat; "the story is told in a few words. Her name was Rubacelle; she was the grand-daughter of a goldsmith of Cadsant, who possessed immense wealth. It was my good fortune to rescue her from a terrible fate during the storming of the city; twice this occurred, and a third time also in Ghent; the history of which circumstance I will another time relate. Unknowing that I had already given my heart to thee, Violet, she fixed her's upon me—a grateful return for the service I had done her; she fostered this passion until it became too powerful to eradicate, and when it attained this unchangeable position, I first became acquainted with it. She had lost every friend she had in the world—she was quite alone; she had wealth, it was true, but no familiar face—no often-pressed hand to welcome her; no companion of her childhood to make her know the world not to be other than a gloomy dungeon for the spirit. I was the only person to whom she could appeal, the only friend she knew, and with the artlessness of pure guileless innocence she disclosed her love to me. Painful as was the task—for I saw her whole happiness was embarked in what she had unfolded—I told her that my love was given to thee, and conveyed it in such terms that—although I did it as gently as I could, that her feelings might not be unnecessarily stung and wounded—she understood I should never change, nor was there any hope to be entertained that I ever should."

"And how bore she this, dear Wat?" asked Violet, anxiously.

"As he who, having erected a palace, white and shining, excelling in its beauty all architecture in existence, which had been the labor of years, and upon which his every hope of fame, aggrandisement, and prosperity depended—would view it, swept away at one blow, without the slightest prospect of it ever being again upraised. I can never forget the change that passed over her features when I said that which made her know her love was hopeless; no words can picture it. I never before or since saw a human being, and one so fair and gentle, look so desolate as when the object she had in living was torn from her—"

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Violet, her eyes filled with tears.

"She made a strong effort to conquer her dreadful emotion, and succeeded," continued Wat; "and then made an appeal to me to suffer her to companion me as a page—she would serve me as a tender sister, she would serve you, too, had she opportunity, and love you, and never strive to make me forget you, or you to wish that she had never accompanied me. I knew that she was quite alone, and her loneliness was rendered more desolate by blighted hopes. Could I have refused her earnest prayer, that she might not be deserted by all the world?"

"Oh, no, dear Wat!" said Violet, weeping with kind sympathy at the poor maiden's history. "No, you did only what you should have done, and I love you more than ever that you should have proved so kind to the gentle girl."

"I am glad to hear you say this," replied Wat, pressing her fondly to his breast. "I did consent, and she accompanied me to every place my duty carried me to; and never could there have been a kinder, gentler, more patient, uncomplaining affectionate being under Heaven, than she proved to me. She was as pure as snow in her every act and thought, and never suffered a moment to pass without performing some little kindness, or striving to rob me of dull thoughts, and make such fancies and speculations concerning you as she thought would cheer me and make my time pass more happily, never wearying, never seeming dull or indisposed to do all that might lighten the privations to which sometimes our position in a foreign land and in an enemy's country subjected us, and always turning to me a seemingly happy and peaceful brow, although she confessed in her dying hour, that it was sometimes done with difficulty, and she would steal away to weep in solitude for what could never come to pass."

"May she receive in heaven all the happiness denied to her here," ejaculated Violet, earnestly.

"Amen!" responded Wat, fervently.

"Was she never discovered," enquired Violet, "to have been a female in a page's attire?"

"No," replied Wat, "although once she was near it. Michael alone knew of her disguise, every one else esteemed her what she appeared—a handsome youth, with quiet and amiable manners."

And then he continued her history until he had made Violet acquainted with the whole of it; and when he spoke of her death, of her dying words, and of her funeral, Violet quite sobbed, so much did the story excite her feelings of pity and commiseration. Wat told her also the gentle Rubacelle's connection with John Chandos, his grief and distraction at her loss, and his determination never to wed, but die, with his sword in hand, in the battle field—a fate which, as will be hereafter seen, was fulfilled.

Of Sir Walter Manny, too, he spoke in the high terms which the noble generosity the knight had displayed towards him deserved, and delivered to her the remembrances which Sir Walter was desirous should be conveyed to her; and she told Wat, that in expectation of his finding the knight the staunch friend he had proved, she had not forgotten the banner she had promised him, that it was finished, and only waited to be presented to him, which was agreed should be done the first opportunity that displayed itself.

After they had some time longer indulged in discourse of the very sweetest nature, Halbert Evesham, his wife, and Wat's parents entered the room, believing it was now their turn to have a share in the company of the new comer; and possessing an inward conviction that they had given both Violet and Wat sufficient time to exhaust every topic of conversation the whole world could afford. Such changes as were of importance, which had taken place during Wat's absence, were related to him; the loss of Ethelbert, with his dying words, and his blessing to him, which affected Wat to hear. They touched but lightly upon the affair at Exmoor, of which Wat made several inquiries; and as briefly upon what occurred at Taynetone, leaving for a future time a detail of the minutiæ, as Wat did of his adventures, that they might serve to beguile the many hours of the summer and winter evenings which they expected to pass happily together. And thus several hours flew swiftly, and it appeared scarcely possible to them that he, who was for the present the cynosure of all eyes, had been among them more than a few minutes.

It was a happy return for all parties.

CHAPTER VII.

"Put back the ringlets from her brow, and gaz'd
Upon those lids, where once such lustre blaz'd,
Ere he could think she was *indeed* his own,
Own darling maid, whom he so long had known
In joy and sorrow, beautiful in both;
Who, ev'n when grief was heaviest—when loth,
He left her for the wars—

* * * * *

It was indeed the touch of those loved lips
Upon her eyes that chas'd their short eclipse,
And gradual as the snow at Heaven's breath
Melts off and shews the azure flowers beneath,
Her lids unclos'd, and the bright eyes were seen
Gazing on his.

* * * * *
* * * * *

When we were parted—oh, could'st thou but know
With what a deep devotedness of woe
I wept thy absence—o'er and o'er again,
Thinking of thee, still thee, till thought grew pain."

T. Moore.

As soon as Michael reached the small garden seat, and with his senseless charge fast locked in his arms, had seated himself upon it, he turned his earnest eyes upon her pale face as it reclined upon his shoulder; he kissed her lips, her eyes, her hands; he pressed her convulsively to his bosom, and felt the hot tears rush into his eyes. How ardently did he scrutinize every feature, and call upon his memory to teach him what changes time and a weary separation from him might have occasioned. She was very pale, but that might be caused by her swoon; still she was very pale, and he fancied her face was thinner, that her eyes appeared more sunken, that her cheeks displayed a hollowness where none had ever before existed, her eyebrows seemed sharper and darker than before, her eyelashes, which lay like a long fringe over her nether eyelid, seemed to have deepened in color, and her hair, too, in contrast with her white brow, was not by some degrees so fair as when he had parted from her. In an instant he traced this change to sorrow at his absence, to the effects of a grief she had borne ever since he had gone so abruptly away. Wat had told him the effect which his departure had upon her, and he believed the grief had never ceased. Most earnestly did he wish it had never taken place; he cursed his own stupidity and thoughtlessness for inflicting so much pain upon her, and pressed her repeatedly to his heart, as though his caresses would display the sorrow he felt for having caused her so much care and anguish; he tried to call her by name several times, but his tongue would not articulate the word. His discovery of the change in her, the emotion incident on his return, and the natural ebullitions of a sick heart was more than he had strength to bear calmly, and as there were none there to see him—even she whom he held in his arms was still in a state of unconsciousness, he turned his head aside, and, covering it with his hand, indulged in a passionate burst of tears, a paroxysm which was a luxury for one whose mind had been so long at the utmost stretch of anticipations, hopes, forebodings, and yet, too, was throbbing with a joy which was instinct with a pleasing painfulness. He let the tears have their way; it was a great relief to him to shed them, and he felt he should be better able, when they had ceased, to bear the interview, and after a little while they were gone, and his eyes were dry again, then again he turned his face to Flora; she still lay in her

swoon, and he made no effort to recover her, as if he fancied she was in a sleep and 'twould be doing her an unkindness to disturb her. He laid his cheek to hers, it was as cold as marble; he parted her hair from her forehead, and kissed her white polished brow, and would not have taken the wealth of worlds for the treasure he then held in his arms. He watched her placid features as a fond mother does her sleeping child—calmly and patiently; and when he had some time done so, being still scarce able to persuade himself that the swoon was not a gentle slumber; he saw her lips move slightly, and her eyelids quiver. then her breast heaved, and she uttered a long sigh. Presently her eyes opened, and she looked wildly round, quite unconscious where she was. At length her eyes lighted upon Michael's face; she perused it rapidly for an instant, then uttered a scream that went to his heart, and hiding her face on his breast, sobbed violently with very joy at his presence—joy which she did not disguise. She flung her arms around his neck, and fairly hugged him; while he, who fancied he had shed every tear he possessed in the world, and should bear the remainder of the meeting so bravely, so very manfully, found the fountain was by no means so dry as he anticipated, and wept, very nearly sobbed, too!

Flora was the first to find speech, such as it was—for it was accompanied by such a mixture of crying and laughing, that a word was scarcely distinguishable.

"You have come back to me, Michael," she exclaimed; "you have come back to me once more! I thought you would not—I thought you would never come again; and yet I thought you would not quite forget me. I was sure you would not give me up entirely—so that you would never see me any more—never, never! Indeed, I have never forgotten you; no, never—nor spoke to, nor looked at, nor thought of any other than you—I have not, Michael!' '

"Bless you, my dear, dear Flora!" cried Michael, his voice thick with emotion; "I was sure you would not. I was a fool ever to leave you, and I am very sorry for it."

"Dear Michael, my own dear Michael, it is so kind of you to say so," responded Flora, "and it was my foolish, wicked thoughtlessness that gave you so much pain, and drove you away. I did not deserve that you should have come back to me, but I should have died if you had not."

"And do you think, Flora, when I came to my senses—for I was very angry, nay, almost mad when I went away, or I should never have gone—that for the trivial offence you gave me, I should have kept away from you for ever? No, no, I love you too dearly for that," said Michael, kissing her fondly as he concluded his speech.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Flora, joyfully, "how happy you make me. I know you love me, Michael; I am sure you do, and so do I you. Oh, Michael, I never found out until you went away how I doated upon you."

"Ah, Flora, I knew long before I went away how I doated on you," exclaimed Michael, with a slow but earnest shake of the head.

"Ah, Michael, that you must," replied Flora, smiling, "for you told me so, so very often; but I little thought how much, or I would never have teased you so much as I did."

"And you have been true to me, Flora?" asked he, looking as though his whole soul was in her reply, which, whatever it might be, he was prepared to receive as Gospel.

"Indeed, Michael, I have—I have—as true as Violet has been to Wat Tyler, and she has been truth itself. Ask her how I have behaved; she will not tell you a falsehood. Ask Halbert—I wish poor Ethelbert, his brother, was alive and here—"

"He is dead, I know," said Michael.

"Yes, poor Ethelbert," she returned, "upon his death-bed spoke very praisingly of me, and if he were here, he would guarantee my word—"

"Your own word, Flora, is quite sufficient for me," said Michael, warmly. "However you might have teased me and vexed me, I never thought so ill of you as to doubt your word."

"Ah, dear Michael, you always thought better of me than I deserved," returned Flora. "I can see my faults now, and Violet has shown me by kind words, and the example of her own conduct, how much I was to blame; but that will never take place again. I find that I love you too dearly to cause you the slightest pain by any frivolous act of mine. No, dear Michael, never shall you again have occasion to beat your breast in anguish, and say that Flora Botolph caused it. Once I have done it; and I think, Michael, if you had seen the effect your departure had upon me, you would have said I had been sufficiently as well as rightly punished."

"Wat told me everything," exclaimed Michael; "and made me see what a fool I had made of myself."

"Not such a fool, Michael."

"Why not?"

"You had been insulted by me; I held you too lightly; thought I could throw you off, and whistle you back again, as one might a tame hawk; but you taught me better—it was for the best you went away, and when you did I found myself grievously mistaken. I found there was not a youth in the village worth a smile of yours—that if they had all been collected in a heap, they were not to me worth your little finger."

"Ha! ha! ha! Flora, you are trying to make me vain."

"I am telling you the truth, Michael; for I never saw one ever to me like you."

"Not the young Earl of Tonbridge?"

"The young Earl of Tonbridge!" she repeated, disdainfully. "No; though he was the cause of our quarrel, I thought no more of him than I did of gruff Leowulf; even while I was appearing to smile upon him, and be so delighted in his company, it was only simple mischief—just the pleasure, and a wicked one it was, of seeing you cross."

"And did you not care a straw for him?"

"No, indeed; nor would have had a word to say to him, a look to throw at him, or smile to waste on him, if he had come a-wooing to me with his castles and estates tied to his back."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Michael, and refreshed himself with a kiss; "I met with him at Cadsant."

"You did!" she exclaimed. "And did he speak to you?"

"He did; he insulted me, and spoke falsely of you."

"Of me!" she exclaimed, with great astonishment.

"Ay, of you, Flora; he entertained a party of young warriors with a vile aspersion of your character, founded upon your behaviour to him when here, and I entertained the same party with a sight of his chastisement. He tried to shirk out of fighting me at first, on the ground that he was an earl's son, and I a peasant's, but his excuse did not serve his turn; a fine, noble-hearted lord, one Lord Lewis Beauchamp, taught him that if he could descend to lie, he had a right to defend himself against him he had aspersed, even though he was a poor peasant. He taught him that honor was honor, Flora, in whatever

garb or station it appeared; and I taught him that an earl's son opposed to a peasant gained no advantage from his title. I humbled his haughtiness and pride no little, I fancy; I made him confess he had told lies about you, that you were as free and pure as the Holy Virgin herself; and then I had a passage of arms with him, in which he found himself the loser, and that, too, before the flower of the army."

"And this, too, after I had wronged you so, dear Michael!" said Flora, energetically. "Indeed you were too kind. I did not deserve that you should have ventured your life to preserve my fame, while you were yet smarting under my unkindness, and was banished from home and friends through me."

"Oh, yes, you did deserve it, Flora," said Michael, fondly; "you were the heart of my heart; what if we had had a foolish quarrel, and in a fit of angry impatience I had chosen to run my neck into a noose I found it difficult to escape from, it was no reason why I should not stand up for you, heart and hand, when I heard you defamed, and I knew the defamer was uttering lies as thick as ears in a field of corn. I did defend it, successfully too, and always would and will while I have power to raise an arm."

"My beloved Michael!" exclaimed Flora, earnestly, "oh, how truly Ethelbert read you when he told me your's was a heart I might be proud of—he was right—I am proud of it, indeed I am, very! Oh, how often I have thought of his words—how often I have longed and prayed for a time to come when I could tell you them, and how my heart beat responsive to them. Only think, Michael, five years and a half we have been separated. Five years and a half! why, it sounds nothing like what it really has been. I have counted the weeks and days, even the hours, and believed we should never get back to Brenchley any more. Oh, I have thought it so tediously long—quite a life time. Indeed, I have sometimes fancied my hair must be getting grey; and when we got here, and they began to talk about King Edward's not letting you come away until the wars were over—and in all probability they would not cease for years to come—I felt inclined to give up all hope, and despair of ever seeing you again; and yet I would not—no, I thought you would not stay away much longer. I told Violet so last night, and even said, perhaps you might be home to-day. And you have come, you see."

"Your prophecy was a good one."

"Oh, yes, and I am so very happy."

"You are really glad to see me back again, then?"

"Glad, Michael! Can you ask me that question seriously?"

"No, my dearest, your welcome of me was too plain an evidence of it; but I don't think your happiness can equal mine."

"Your's cannot surpass mine, Michael."

"Well, we will not quarrel about it; but each believe there is no happiness equal to it on earth. You say the period of our separation has appeared long to you—what, then, must it have done to me?"

"Not so long as to me; for I was in a lonely, dreary place nearly all the time; seeing the gentle Edith pine away day by day, and quite certain that ere long she must die, which she did. And then there was Violet, sad and dispirited; and if I had nothing else to make me sorrowful that would have been sufficient, for I could not bear to see her dull and low-hearted, who had so often done her best to cheer me when I was sad; and then, too, I was away from Brenchley, so that I had everything to make the time drag heavily upon my hands, and as I did little else than think of you, of course it made our *absence seem longer* and longer than it really was. There was another cause, too, which helped to make the time more weary."

"What was that?" asked Michael, seeing her hesitate.

"There was a young miner, named Benulph, where we were staying," she continued, "who had for his lady-love a pretty girl, one Blanche Fell, and Alwena, who was the young miner's sister, had a lover in a gentle youth named Merry Merlin, and I used often to see them wandering about together, saying kind things to each other, and looking so fondly upon one another, that I could not but think of you and I, Michael, and astonish as well as sadden myself by remembering how long it was since we had wandered thus together. Ah! you who were in the noise and bustle of a soldier's life could not have time to think so much of me, or find the time so long and weary."

"Indeed, Flora, I could," replied Michael, quickly; "whether in the battle, in the camp, on the march, in my bed, awake or dreaming, you were never out of my mind. I saw you constantly, and what was more terrible to my heart, could foresee no time likely to bring me my discharge, so that I might return to you. I said very little about it, but I thought a great deal I can assure you, and there was not an expedition upon which we were bound I did not wish the victory would be so signal that it would be the last. I used to fight with the hope that my exertions would do something towards it, and so I think did Wat, for he used to fight like a devil—but, no; one was no sooner ended than we were ordered on another, and much as I liked fighting when I was in it, I grew very sick of it, as it kept me from you. Every anticipation was defeated, and instead of our victories bringing us peace, they seemed to multiply the necessity for fighting. Every day the prospect of return grew more remote, so that I seemed to have been a thousand years away from you, and had occasion to resign myself as quietly as I could for another thousand. Talk of the bustle and turmoil of war driving away my thoughts, why it's all stuff; it was in the heat of the battle, when I was hottest in my work, I used to think most strongly of you, and in peace there was nothing to draw my mind from you in any shape."

"Not in that of lovely maidens?" asked Flora, suddenly remembering Fell's stories of those formidable enemies to English damsels whose lovers were abroad, and within the influence of their enchantments.

"No what!" echoed Michael, lifting his brows in astonishment.

"No young maidens, so lovely, they were only fit to be in paradise," replied Flora.

"Can't say I saw any," said Michael, with a shake of the head which conveyed his perfect unconsciousness of remembering anything of the sort.

"Perhaps you won't say you saw any," said Flora, with an arch look at him.

"I shouldn't hesitate if I had," replied Michael; "you are the only one I know of fit to be in paradise—except Violet—yes, except her. I think she is handsome enough to be anywhere, and so are you."

"I did not ask you for that," cried Flora, with a laugh; "a little bird told me that in the countries where you have been, there were maidens whose beauty surpassed all imagination, that they were positive fairies in human shape, and they fell deeply in love with English youths the moment they set eyes upon them, and that after a little languishment and blandishment, sighing, and making most fascinating use of their eyes, they so beguiled the youths that they forgot those they left behind them,

and, with a wickedness for which there is no pardon, wandered away with these artful, cozening damsels, nobody but themselves knew where—"

"Why, where did you hear this nonsense?" asked Michael.

"I am afraid, by your changing features, it is not such nonsense as you would have me believe," exclaimed Flora, holding up her finger to him; "a little bird not only told me that, but it said you had been grievously infected by the charms of one of these paragons of beauty. Come, tell me, Michael, was it not so?"

"I am afraid, Flora, that little bird of your's was singularly given to lying," replied Michael, with a laugh; "for in all my travels I never by any chance met with any so lovely as you describe these fairies to be."

"So lovely!" iterated Flora; "oh, then, you did meet with some?"

"With some!" echoed he; "of course—with hundreds, but none quite so beautiful as the angels in Paradise—yet there was one—"

"Ha!" exclaimed Flora, quickly, "there was one—you confess that. Who was she? was she one of these damsels? was she very lovely? did she make love to you, Michael? did you grow fond of her? Ah, Michael, did she love like me? but that she couldn't—but I dare say she wanted to take you away, but you wouldn't go; no, you still had a thought of me. Didn't she coax you very much, and look very, very tenderly? and didn't you find her, after all, artful and designing? and didn't—"

"Gently, Flora, gently," cried Michael; "how am I to answer all these questions, unless you give them to me at a slower pace?" Why, I have forgotten the first half a dozen already; but it's of not much consequence, as far as I am concerned, for she had nothing to do with me; her winning ways were not bestowed upon me, although she was very amiable—I confess I was very fond of her—"

"Michael!"

"Yes, Flora, I mean what I say; but her devotions were all paid to Wat."

"To whom?"

"To Wat—Wat Tyler; she was his companion all the while we were away. She doated on him, and he loved her too."

"Good Heavens! Michael, this can't be true?"

"It not only can, but is; and I loved her almost as much as Wat did."

"You are saying this to teaze me, sir!"

"Not I, Flora. I tell you I was particularly fond of her. She was not only one of the prettiest creatures I ever saw, but one of the sweetest dispositions, and was always very kind to me."

"Of that I have not the smallest doubt; and of course you returned her kindness to the utmost of your ability?"

"To be sure I did—I did all in my power to make her happy."

"Indeed! and yet, while you were away, in battle, in camp, sleeping or waking, you never had me out of your mind?"

"That's true, Flora."

"True, indeed! Then it must have been the goadings of your wicked conscience."

"Not exactly that, though I confess it had something to do with it; but my kindness to her was never a goad to my conscience."

"Then it ought to have been, for you ought to have been ashamed of yourself!"

"Flora!"

"Yes, Michael, I mean it. I never forgot you while you were away, nor laughed nor flirted with anybody, and I thought you did not either. I could have sworn you did not, and would never have believed it, if you had not yourself told me."

"What do you mean, Flora?" asked Michael, for the first time awakening to a consciousness of having made a slip somewhere, but not exactly cognizant of the precise place.

"What do I mean?" she answered, removing, to his increasing surprise, his arm from about her waist. "You know very well what I mean; you are changed, Michael—I never dreamed this of you," she added, bursting into tears.

"For God's sake, Flora, explain!" cried Michael, opening his eyes as wide as they would go, and feeling as though he was in a cold vapour bath. "I changed!—I am not changed towards you."

"You are, Michael; or else why tell me that some worthless girl lived with Wat, and though she was fond of him, yet you paid her great attention, and received the same from her."

"What, Flora, jealous of Rubacelle!" cried Michael, with a laugh, suddenly relieved from a great weight; "oh, you had no reason to be jealous of her!"

"I should think not, indeed!" replied Flora, not at all appeased; indeed, believing Michael's laugh and speech something like a cool addition to his villany: "I would be jealous of one worth being jealous of—no, I am more hurt at your meanness."

"My meanness!" echoed Michael.

"Yes," she rejoined; "if you had thought it worth while to bestow your affection upon a damsel while you were away from—from England," she would not say 'me,'—"you might have been more honorable, more honest, than to have become attached to one whom you acknowledge doated on Wat, and was his companion all the while you were absent. I should not, perhaps, have minded if you had had one of your own—that is, if a maiden had fallen in love with you—but that's not very likely, for there are not many such fools as I am in the world; but if she had, and you had been fond of her while you were away—but to be fond of one who could not have cared a straw for you—was already another's—is what I shouldn't have thought of you. As for Wat, there is no excuse for him—none; his ingratitude, his deceit, is of the blackest dye. I'll tell Violet, you'll see if I don't; she shall cast him off for ever. Wat, too! that was always so very rigid a stickler for truth in love! Ah, but it's always the way—those who are so very quiet and profess so much are the worst; I have often heard it said, and this proves it."

Michael began laughing as she commenced her speech, and before she had finished it, he was in a perfect convulsion. He clapped his hands, and the tears ran down his cheeks—he held his sides and shook again; and before he could recover himself to speak, he received a smart smack on the face from Flora, who grew quite enraged at what she thought his perfidy and his behaviour. She tried to quit the place, but he held her fast by the waist, and would not suffer her, although she struggled hard, and frowned, and cried, and called him unkind, and various names, all of which served to double his mirth and his tears. At last, when he recovered his breath, he said—

"You'll be the death of me, Flora!"

"I wish I could!" she cried; "there would be one perfidious, deceitful, unkind, base, ungrateful—"

"Stop, Flora, stop; my dearest, dearest little angel."

"Don't little angel me, sir; go to your little angel abroad!"

"I have left no angel there, Flora—nor no little angels!"

"Let me go, Michael—I will not stop a moment longer with you. I thought I should be so—so—happy—wh—when you ca—came home—and—and—n—n—now I—I—I am br—br—broken-hearted!" she sobbed.

These sobs were more than Michael could stand; his laugh stopped in an instant.

"My dear, dear Flora," he exclaimed, earnestly, "do not cry—it is all nonsense—let me explain to you."

"You have explained enough!" she cried, still struggling to get away.

"I have explained nothing. Listen to me—indeed the story is no laughing matter."

"I know that very well; you are right, it is not—at least to me."

"No, nor for that matter, to any one. The maiden I spoke of was one Wat and I saved in the storming of Cadsant, where she lost every friend in the wide world. She fell in love with Wat—told him of it—and he told her instantly that he was already in love with Violet."

"He did!"

"Yes, there is no falsity in Wat; he behaved as he always does, nobly; and when she found they never could wed, she—as she had no friends to go to—begged Wat to let her live with him in the capacity of a page, and he consented. And, Flora, before God I say it, a more innocent, pure being never could be all the time she was with us. A sister she was in all things, and always so very kind and gentle. I saw her pining away day by day, growing paler and thinner. I don't think Wat noticed it so much as I did, for he never said anything, neither did I, nor she: she never uttered a complaint or sigh when before either, to make us think she was in the least unhappy; but I could see she was, and I think if she had not been killed she would not long have survived."

"Killed, Michael!" exclaimed Flora.

"Yes; she was struck down by an arrow in an assault upon Vannes, and thus perished, poor girl! You would have loved her, Flora, dearly; she was so quiet, so affable, so very amiable. Ah! many times, when Wat was not by, she would talk to me about Violet, and I used to tell her how lovely she was; and, indeed, how very like her, for there was a similarity between them; and she asked me if I thought Violet loved Wat Tyler, and I told her how dearly she did, and how I knew he loved her, and sometimes talking so would make the tears steal in her eyes; and then I would talk about Brenchley, and about you, Flora, and she used to wish such good things about you and me, that it was impossible not to be very fond of her."

"Was she very pretty?"

"Indeed she was very beautiful, and only twenty when she died."

"Ah, Michael! this is quite another thing to what I thought it was."

"I knew that, but you shall hear Wat tell it—it will make you cry I know; it always makes me dull to think about it; so let's change the subject, only you will not think me now a base, unkind, ungrateful—"

"My dear Michael," exclaimed Flora, and made no objection to the hearty kiss Michael saluted her exclamation with.

"Ah! if you are inclined to be jealous, I will tell you something much more likely to make you so than that about poor Rubacelle," said Michael, when his *lips were once more* free.

"No you cannot, dear Michael," said Flora, fondly, "for I will never be so any more."

"We shall see—so prepare! When we quitted the Tower of London we made for Chepeside, and went to an hostel there, 'Ye Sunne,' to make inquiries about you; for when we were in England last an accident—of which you shall know in good time—made us acquainted that you had been there, and had been run away with, had come back, and then started for Gloucestershire. When we reached the house, there were only two damsels within—"

"I know—Lucy and Cecilia."

"Exactly; and you know what sort of damsels they are?"

"What sort! They behaved very kindly to me."

"And so they did to me—at least, one of them."

"Which was that?"

"Even the pretty Lucy."

"But she is married; and, so far as I could see, was very quiet in her demeanour, and had not tongue or eyes for any one but her husband."

"When there was no one else there. Do you know, Flora, I found great favor in her sight—I mean particularly great favor."

"Else had she no taste, Michael!"

"Yes; but her favor went beyond taste—it reached almost more than liking, and really made me feel uncommonly comfortable while I staid in the house; and Wat was quite as agreeably situated with Cecilia."

"It was very fortunate that you should be so kindly greeted upon your arrival in London. I think Cecilia's reception of Wat, by-the-bye, was more likely to be a warm one than Lucy's welcoming of you."

"Why, dear Flora?"

"Because she was by far the liveliest of the two, was unmarried, and seemed to possess a very strong notion that a young maiden's eyes were made for the sole purpose of fastening, with a gracious expression, upon every youth who possessed any advantages of person, and certainly seems to believe we are all brothers and sisters; that it is the duty of every damsel to be well inclined to every young man as if he really was her brother, provided he was well-looking, which was a consideration of much importance, and productive of a reservation, that all the ugly ones were not admitted in the pale of her belief. They might be relations, it was true, but only distant ones. I liked Cecilia, for she shewed me a great many kindnesses; but I had rather her attentions were displayed to Wat than to you."

"But Lucy, I believe, held the same opinion respecting our relationship as her sister—at least, she treated me as warmly as if I was the nicest brother she ever had. I hardly think a brother would have been so well favored as I was."

"The vanity of you, Michael!"

"I don't mean in personal appearance, Flora; I have a little more grace in me than to say that, but I mean in her personal acts."

"What do you mean by personal acts?"

"Why looking at me with eyes that did not appear to be at all disgusted with my face and figure, shaking hands with me with a pressure that betokened considerable friendship, leaning her shoulder against mine while we were talking so remarkably tenderly, and not being at all offended when, in consideration of these little tokens of amity, I drew my hand across my lips, and—"

"I don't believe it; her husband was there, and would have trimmed your hauberk handsomely, and have rated her so that all the persons in the neigh-

bourhood of St. Paul's would have been aware of his anger; I don't believe it. Aha, I know how sharply he looked after her—you want to make me jealous, but I won't be, try as much as you please."

"But I did kiss her, Flora—positively, and no falsification—I did really and actually kiss her, not once only, but five, six, seven—"

"I'll not believe it."

"But I tell you, upon my honor, I really did; and I was so overjoyed at getting to London and hear tidings of you, that I could have kissed her great grandmother if she'd been there, and had a beard as long as Peter the Hermit. I had at least a round dozen of kisses—besides, her husband was out at the time."

"Out! and you and Wat alone with those two girls?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Michael, rubbing his hands gleefully on seeing a change pass over her features as she asked the question with great eagerness. "Yes, quite alone, not even the drawer there. Ha, ha, ha! both Cecilia and Lucy never exercised their principles of sisterly affection for nice-looking young men to a greater degree, I warrant!"

"Didn't they!"

"No; they were so very kind, so very pleased with our company, made us so exceedingly welcome, so very much at home, it quite did our hearts good. Ha! ha! ha! Flora, what growing jealous."

"Not I indeed, Michael!"

"A little. Aha! I can see the color rise, and the lip pout. Just a little bit, Flora, are you not?"

"No, I am too much bound to them to be jealous of them—too grateful for their kindnesses to be jealous."

"I am very pleased to hear they were kind to you as well as to me."

"Yes, it is gratifying, for they were quite as kind to me as to you. I had to thank them for the introduction of some very handsome gallants to me while staying there. Indeed, if it had not been for that, my time in London would have been very dull."

"Flora!" exclaimed Michael, his smile beginning to march off in a trice.

"Oh, yes, very dull indeed. They soon taught me we were all brothers and sisters. I was an apt scholar, and should have been a dullard indeed if I had still remained as ignorant as when I came there; after their example, too, and the enforcement of their precepts by the cavaliers in so gentle and persuasive a manner. Yes, I must confess they are lively girls, and 'Ye Sonne' is a pleasant place; I should like to go there again, and stay for a week or a fortnight, or even a month. Why, how serious you look, Michael!—what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing—I feel rather hot—it is very sultry to-day; besides, I was just thinking whether it was one of these gallants you speak of that made themselves so cursedly agreeable—so very brotherly—who inflicted the outrage upon you, which I should have liked to have been at hand to have rewarded."

"What mean you?"

"Why, I suppose it was one of those peacocks with whom you found the time go so pleasantly, while I was far away, having very different thoughts of your employment, that carried you off."

"I had not the pleasure of his acquaintance until we journeyed to his estate, and then he made himself very agreeable."

"Oh, without doubt, and of course had very *good* encouragement for his damned delightful *'haviour.*"

"Michael! Michael!" cried Flora, hastily, and then added, with a laugh, "who is jealous now? eh?"

"A very pretty question to ask, after giving me those pleasing hints of your occupation, when I thought, and could have sworn—"

"That I was as true to you as I have been, dear Michael," exclaimed Flora, putting her hand playfully before his mouth; "pray alter that grim face, and pray get rid of the solemn speech you are about to favor me with, for there is not the slightest occasion for it."

"No occasion?"

"Not any. In the first place, I never saw one gallant in 'Ye Sonne' while there I staid."

"Not one, Flora? Then what made you tell me that you passed so much agreeable time with them?"

"For the same reason that you told me you made yourself so very gracious with Lucy, only with this difference in our success, that you did not make me jealous although you tried, and I believe with much truth in your story—and I did make you jealous without the slightest truth in mine. Ah, there goes away the long face, and here comes the smile again—the clouds have vanished, and the sun has burst forth again."

"Ha! ha! ha! I confess, Flora, you had the advantage of me. I did feel rather scorchified, but it is all gone again; and you were a little touched too—come, were you not?"

"No, Michael, for a moment's reflection taught me I had no cause to fear your want of truth to me. I heed not your having kissed Lucy a thousand times, for it would only be the effect of joy at being once more home again, and could not make me jealous, because it would not diminish your love for me; but as you tried to make me so, I thought it would be but fair that I should return the compliment."

"And so you did, most handsomely. Now, Flora, let me have a good look at you, for I want to see how much you have changed since I have been away."

"Shall I walk before you, sir, as a steed is led out to show his qualities?"

"You may stand up, Flora, and I will feast my eyes upon you until—until—never mind until what—but I will feast my eyes upon you."

And when he had well gratified his eyes by seeing that she was really taller, a little more womanly, but only that much which makes a bud a young blossom, perhaps a little thinner and paler, he came to the conclusion that there never was anything in the world so perfect, at least in his eyes, as his own dear Flora. And Flora could not be satisfied, without seeing that he had grown taller, and more set, that his face, open, frank, and manly as it was, was handsomer than ever, and that this fine, tall, handsome, martial-looking youth, was her own—her's, and nobody else's—that he loved her better than any one in the world beside, and she wouldn't have changed him—no, not to be Queen of England; and as her fond eyes scanned his well-favored person, she laughed with pride, and clapped her hands with delight, and could scarce believe she was really so happy as to be his chosen bride—could scarcely believe he was the Michael she used to tease so, feeling she should be afraid now to do it for fear of losing him altogether, instead of for a time, and could not refrain from putting her arms round him just to satisfy herself that it was really him—that it was no dream that the morning would chase away, but really the arrival of the happiness she had so long looked forward to with such eager, such fond, and anxious anticipations. And when Michael proposed that they should enter the house, she clung to him as if fearful of losing him again and

leaned her head upon his shoulder, while he twined his arm round her waist, and though she heard his suggestion, she paid no heed to it, for she thought it was giving him up to his friends a trifle too soon; and as she exhibited no disposition to move, Michael found himself as equally inclined to stay where they were; he, therefore, again seated himself upon the bench with her by his side, her head still upon his shoulder, and his eyes perusing her's. After a little while, he said—

"I wonder how long it will be before Violet and Wat get married? I hope it will not be long first."

"Why, Michael?"

"Why? why because I fully expect there will be a wedding upon the same day—don't you, Flora?"

Flora formed small devices with her foot upon the loose earth, but answered not.

"I mean our wedding, of course, Flora—yours and mine; ha! ha! I say, that will be a happy day, rather. I was talking it over with Wat before we came home, and we made an agreement about it which I will tell you presently—But about our being married, Flora, your mother and father won't say a word against it, will they?"

"Oh, no; they are very fond of you, Michael."

"And I suppose their daughter won't, either? eh?"

"No, no, indeed!" she replied slowly; and dropping her eyes to the earth, continued, "For I think she, too, is very fond of you, Michael!"

Michael's reply was a sudden and fervent pressure of her to his heart.

"Well, dear Flora," he said, "I have got a good round sum as prize money, and that, with a little care, will be enough to keep us comfortably and happily all our lives."

"I, too, have some property, Michael, which has been left to me by the chevalier who ran away with us from London; he was killed, and he left his property to me and Violet in reparation of his conduct; and it shall all be yours—all, if it were thrice as much."

"Bless your good-natured heart! Mine is enough for us; yours will do for our children."

"Michael!"

"Yes, we will take care of it for them. Do you know, the arrangement I made with Wat was respecting them."

"Never mind that now, Michael."

"Oh, yes, I must tell you. Our first boy is to be called Wat, and the second Michael; our first girl is to be named after you, and the second Violet; and the third boy shall be called Halbert, and the fou—"

"Do you not think they will wonder where we are?" interrupted Flora, suddenly, with scarlet cheeks, thinking it perhaps quite as well to change the subject.

"Who?"

"All in the cottage," she replied.

"Oh, never mind them, we will go in directly. If I can persuade Wat to get married in a day or two, you will not hesitate to have me at the same time, will you?"

"In a day or two!—that is impossible. Violet will never be wedded at so short a notice as that."

"Quite long enough, I am sure; I am not going to wait weeks or months, if they are. I can be ready at a moment's notice, and I don't see why they shouldn't be, and so I shall tell Wat. I shall say there's Flora and I waiting with the utmost anxiety to be married, and as we wish to be married on the same day as you, we shall take it as a particular favor if you can make it the day after to-morrow."

"And he will say the month after next."

"Will he? Well, if he does, I shall congratulate him upon his patience, but, at the same time, confess my exceeding deficiency in the possession of that virtue; and regretting that the wish I have so long indulged in, that of being married at the same time as him, cannot be gratified, shall invite him to our wedding, two days hence, at the farthest."

"Two days!—you are jesting, Michael?"

"Never said anything more in earnest in my life. I want to see you my wife, Flora; and that's an event which cannot happen too soon for me. I have had fighting enough for five years, now I want to have a little love and happiness."

"You can have both, Michael, and yet there may be no necessity for our being married the day after to-morrow."

"No necessity! who knows what may turn up if we wait two months? Who can tell what outrageous Fate might treat us too? No, no—we have more command over two days than two months; I have no objection to wait two days, but as to two months, it is not only preposterous, but impossible."

"Not if I very much wished it, dear Michael."

"Come, Flora! no coaxing—I won't be persuaded to wait any longer; I am sure you don't wish it any more than I do."

"I wish to be married on the same day as Violet; I have set my heart upon it, dear Michael, and I know you are not ill-natured enough to say me nay, now are you? No, I can see you are not—your kind eyes tell me you are not."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Michael; "it won't do—I am too anxious to be married for that; it won't do—I'm not to be coaxed in that fashion."

But it did do, and he was coaxed in that fashion; for before he left that bench, he kissed her, and said he supposed she must have her own way, even if he did have to wait two months ere the consummation of his wishes took place.

And then they entered the house, and joined the already happy party assembled there, and there was very much talking ensued, no little laughing, and such a deal of happiness. Both Wat and Michael had been seen to pass through the village, although, as they galloped through, they were not recognised—yet it was soon known that they were home again, and before the time for repose had arrived, half the village, in the shape of laughing, smirking damsels, and stout manly youths, paid a visit to welcome the new comers; and it was astonishing to see at what a premium our two heroes were with the young lasses who came to see them, notwithstanding they were already engaged without a chance of their being released—and did not appear to notice the tender, kind, sly, sparkling glances with which they were favoured, as anything more than the friendly greetings of old companions. And it was remarkable to hear how these same young maidens, on their way home, indulged their lovers with a whole, true, and particular history of their opinions respecting the warriors—how they thought them the bravest looking, handsomest, nicest looking young men they had ever set eyes upon, and sighed as they said, "how fortunate both Violet and Flora were;" all of which drew from the young men—who really, in their hearts, believed their old companions to be the best fellows in the world—great doubts that they were changed a bit, and could not, for the life of them, see that they were such uncommonly fascinating creatures as their sweethearts took such pains to declare they were; and some of them, in their little touches of jealousy, went so far as to hint that their beloved had better tell our heroes how high they stood in their estimation, and throw themselves into their arms at once—

and out of mischief, and love of teazing, some of the damsels said in all probability they should, if an opportunity offered, which made the youths utter several very ironical, but, as the maidens thought, very spiteful remarks, and be very grand, very haughty, very cool, and, withal, very silent—pursuing their way without a word, until the gentlemen ventured some further remark upon the subject, accompanied by a question, whether the lady would like to hear him praise a maiden in the way she had our heroes, to which she replied, that she neither knew nor cared; that he was exceedingly ill-natured, very unkind, not much short of a brute—that she was a fool, had been too fond of him by half, and wound up by begging him not to talk to her any more—"he needn't, there were others, she dare say, who would be glad to keep company with her, who wouldn't take every opportunity as he did to say things which he knew were not true, and which he only said just because he knew it hurt her feelings,"—and here she wept—he strenuously denied the imputation, repeated that there was nobody on earth he liked so well as her, and she suffering herself, after a great deal of earnest talking on his part to be persuaded into the belief that he spoke truth, they parted better friends than ever.

Now it came to pass, that Michael's anxiety to be married infected Wat in a very great degree, and in some conversations which passed between them—the former's impatience rendering him vastly eloquent—the infection was communicated more strongly than ever. And when the two had made up their minds as to the precise time when they would proceed to the altar, they talked the matter over with the parents on both sides. It was found—and Michael undertook, if a doubt was entertained, to prove it incontestibly—that every arrangement could be made for the happy event in a fortnight. And when that point was decided, Wat took Violet for a walk in the old wood, and stopping at the little bank where he had so often sat with her, he, with gentle eloquence, acquainted her with what had transpired between him and the old people, and it now only waited for her to say if she would have him upon the day he named, or would herself name the day; and she put both her hands in his, and looking him with the sweetest affection in the eyes, told him she would give herself to him for ever, whenever he pleased.

Michael wasted not a moment in informing Flora what had been determined on; and when she knew Violet was to be married at that time, she gave a willing assent, and in her heart wished it had been the morrow.

Perhaps it was Michael that made the whole village acquainted with the event which was to be done, in all its bearings so full of happiness. Whoever it was, they were speedily aware of it, and the young men were most excessively delighted to hear it, because it was putting a sort of padlock upon the fascinations of our heroes; and the young lasses were equally delighted to hear of it, because it augured a festival, a dance, a delightful day of fun and enjoyment.

The villagers met, and resolved to make it a high festival; and a deputation of old and young waited upon Halbert, and made him acquainted with their purpose, and he returned them thanks in his own and the young people's name, for having, as he told them, so highly honored him, and expressed the pleasure he should feel in having so joyous an occasion so celebrated.

Thereupon great preparations were made for the wedding; oh! what new dresses, new ribbons, new decorations, had the young maidens! One was going to wear this, the other that, and another something else, but all of the most killing make and fashion. Oh! for the hearts that were that day to be slaughtered without remorse! oh! the victims that were to be enmeshed, entangled, imbedded in love inextricably! and oh! the female friends that were to be astonished, outrivalled, and outshone! oh! the arrangements of hair that were to be! the one friend to dress another's, on the strict promise that she was to return the compliment with her best ability; oh! to think how the ribbons were to be placed, the decorations contrived, and the dresses worn! and oh! what thoughts floated deliciously through their brain of the nice young men who would be there, whom they should dance with, who talk with, who flirt with; and oh! how certain they all were that they should have such fun, such enjoyment, such pleasure, such dancing, such games, and, perhaps, such kissing!

> "The dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
> Picturing—"

the joys that were anticipated.

And didn't the young men look forward to that day! To think of the purchases they made, too! oh, what a roaring trade had the tailor for the time being! and hadn't they made up their minds to have a rare day of it, one would like to know! and didn't those who had no sweethearts resolve to have a choice that day—perhaps half-a-dozen of the best! and didn't those who had ladye loves make up their mind to look sharp after them, to keep them all to themselves, and suffer nobody to touch them or look kindly on them but their own particular selves! and wasn't there quantities of hopes and expectations, desires and determinations, to prove winners at the various games—all to shew the maidens how expert they were, and how they had picked out for a lover one who was so dexterous and clever! and wasn't the maypole thought of! and wasn't the eating and the drinking remembered! and who among them thought that it would be a wet, or a cloudy, or a dull day! or who thought they should not enjoy it to their heart's content! and who did not look forward for it with all the eagerness and anxiety imaginable, and fancy that a fortnight never was so long!

But who looked forward for it so anxiously, so earnestly, as Wat and Michael—and we may as well include Violet and Flora!

And all the hopes and anxieties, the anticipations and expectations were rewarded, for the day came at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

"A day, the fairest sure, that ever rose!"

PRIOR.

"To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past out worn."

SHELLEY.

"Wyth this rynge y the wedde, and thys gold and selver the geve, and wyth my bodi y the worshippe, and wyth all my worldith catel y the honoure."

ANCIENT MSS. OF THE SALISBURY MISSAL.

"White kerchief waving,
Were strung together like a row of pearls;
Link'd hand in hand, dancing; each, too, having
Down her white neck long floating auburn curls."

BYRON.

"Each was the other's mirror, and but read
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem;
And knew such brightness was but the reflection
Of their exchanging glances of affection.

The gentle pressure, and the thrilling touch—
The least glance better understood than words,
Which still said all, and ne'er could say too much.
* * * * *
All these were theirs." IBID.

"The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness.
* * * * *
Ha! ha! the animation of delight." SHELLEY.

IT does sometimes happen, that when a fine day is very desirable, there comes a fine day; it is very rare that this is the case, but in the present instance it was the case—and accordingly, the morning appointed for the wedding was ushered in without a cloud. People in the time of Edward III. were early risers, and early retirers; in Brenchley they were proverbially so, but upon this morning, the oldest there was ready to greet the sun as he made his appearance over the horizon. The whole village was awake and full of bustle, while stars were yet twinkling in the horizon; although at this period of the year (June,) there is no real night, as the almanacs have it; but then there were such preparations to be made for the day, such attiring, such adopting this little ornament here, such discarding another from thence; such a beating of hearts as the morning sun began casting long shadows, and had a peep into the dressing-room windows to see what was going on. And then there were such questions of "How do I look?" and the reply and interrogatory "Oh, so nice; how do I?" which, of course, met with a favorable answer. Of all things least attended to was the breakfast—it was as nice as ever, looked as tempting, but it was unheeded; they knew there would be plenty of eating during the day, and besides, when one's just dressed and got everything in apple-pie order, one cannot set to and munch, and munch, and munch.

And then to see the goings-on in Halbert Evesham's cottage! Did either Violet or Flora get a wink of sleep the night previous to this memorable morning? Not they! they laid in the same bed, and how they talked—at least, Flora—and how she laughed, and chuckled, and laughed again, and how in her heart she loved Michael all the time. And how Violet thought of the happiness that would be hers in being Wat's wife! and what a little she heard of all that Flora had so pleasantly chattered about! and where they not out of bed while the sun was yet sleeping! and hadn't they a couple of nice bridesmaids, who were going to help them to dress! and didn't they all set to work with all their hearts upon the things which had all been so carefully laid out the night before, that there might be nothing to impede them in the morning! and when they began to attire, and were in the midst of high dressing, if anybody had intruded, wouldn't they have "caught it!"

And if ever Wat Tyler tried to look his best, did he not on that morning? was not everything he was going to wear quite new, and of the best material? had he not a bright Lincoln green cotehardie on, and the softest textured chausses? was not his white throat bare! and for that day would he have hidden his handsome head in a capuchon! and when he was equipped, did he not look a fine, handsome, manly fellow, well worthy of being the bridegroom of such a bride as Violet!

And didn't Michael take a deal of trouble to dress himself! Didn't he fidget about the set of his clothes, which were new, and in all respects like Wat's! And did he not ever and anon keep breaking out into gleeful bursts of laughter, at he knew not what, only that he kept thinking of Flora—that in a few hours she would be his—his own, really and truly his own private property, and nobody else's in the wide world beside! And when he was dressed, looking a prize well worth the having of any maiden, didn't he begin to think he had been dressed a month, and that none of them would be at the church at the time appointed! and could he find a spot that he could rest quietly in for one moment!

Ah! was not that A morning!

And while the bustle was at its very highest, and everybody had something to do—or looked as if they had—the church bells suddenly burst forth in a merry peal. Oh! how that glad sound went to all their hearts! how the bustle increased; how those who had not breakfasted suddenly found they did not care about having any; and how those who had, were exceedingly glad that at least that part of the preparation for the day was over. Never were people so busy as they were in Brenchley that morning; and, at last, only to think how delightful! all were ready to start—actually to quit Halbert's house for the church. How tremendously everybody perspired, for it was going to be such a hot day: and how little they heeded it, excepting some of the young damsels, who began to entertain most alarming apprehensions that their pretty faces would be horribly scarlet with the heat.

Oh! how very lovely Violet looked when attired, and ready to take Wat's arm! How his eyes glistened, and his heart glowed with rapture, as he gazed upon her; how simply she was dressed—all white, of the very snowiest hue, one red rose in her girdle, one white, with a small sprig of lilies of the valley, adorning her long shining fair hair; her deep blue eyes, with their long beautiful eyelashes, shone more resplendently, and yet instinct with softness, than ever; her skin, so Wat thought, never looked so dazzlingly white; and her cheeks would have had a beautiful color, but that excitement robbed them of their due: still there was a tinge, though faint, yet most beautiful,

"And so she moved under the bridal veil."

Wat's whole soul looked out from his eyes as he greeted her, and never could man think himself so blessed as he did, when, gazing upon her loveliness, seeing her exquisite eyes turned so fondly upon him,

he knew that a time would shortly come when he could say—

"In the lustre of her youth, she gave
Her hand, with her heart in it"

to him.

Violet's appearance was followed, or rather accompanied, by that of Flora, for they entered the room together, and Michael sprung forward to seize her hands, and gloat upon her beauty. She was attired like Violet—there might have been a ribbon or a flower different, but the effect was precisely the same. She looked, in Michael's eyes, an angel; and if it had not been for discomposing the dress and hair, wouldn't he have squeezed her to his heart! However, under the circumstances, that was not to be thought of, and he restrained his exuberance of feelings, and contented himself with pressing her little white hand with a vigor almost painful to her, but that it was done by him; he looked at her again and again—his heart was very full—richly, painfully full. Ah! was there a treasure in the known world, or all the treasures of the globe in earth and sea collected into one heap, would he have taken for her—no, nor thrice ten thousand times its value, nor that, nor anything.

And then they really moved from the house towards the little church that stood upon a neighbouring rise, among a quantity of trees, which, for gracefulness of form, might very well have belonged to a fairy land. There went, first, musicians—their instruments were simple, and their skill not very extraordinary; but their will was good, and if they did not play "Haste to the Wedding," they played an air which had precisely the same meaning, and did quite as well. They were followed by a troop of youths and maidens, who were "drest all in their best," and who, if they did smirk and smile, behaved very well—which means, they had not quite warmed into loud laughter and merry banterings. Then there came half-a-dozen bridegrooms' grooms of the second remove, most jauntily attired, not a little good-looking, and not a little determined, as soon as possible, to turn their good looks to good account; they were followed by six bridesmaids' maids, who were all provokingly pretty, and quite as much disposed to commit the deadliest havoc in the hearts of mankind, as the youths preceding them designed upon theirs. Then came six more bridegrooms' grooms, of the first remove, still handsomer than those who had gone before. Michael had had the picking of them, and he determined that they should do his selection honor. Most of them had made their choice in the way of sweethearts, and perhaps were not bent so much upon making maidens hearts their own; nevertheless, they looked very smiling, and used their eyes with a most perfect sense of freedom, as though nobody had a lien upon them. And now came the bridesmaids, some of them the elect of the youths immediately preceding them; for, certes! Brenchley could turn out some sweet lasses, and these were six of the very prettiest. Perhaps they knew how ravishing were their faces—perhaps they were quite conscious that they walked among the sons of men like angels; and perhaps they thought they could do no less than favor the many admiring gazers with soft and sly glances—the more especially as the backs of their swains were turned to them. Perhaps they thought that upon an occasion like this, they had a right to be very kind and gracious; but, whatever their thoughts, there is no doubt that they did smile, and appear most amiable; and many a youth who was *not* their devoted swain, obtained looks which went to his heart, and made it throb with ecstacy.

And now followed the cynosure of all eyes—the two couple who were to be united, bearing the expression which young hearts ever wear when they are about to be wedded to the objects of their dearest choice. The parents of each followed; and another troop of smiling maidens and merry youths brought up the rear.

And, while yet on their way, there was a sudden shout, an uproar; but it was one of joy—a loud hurrah given by those in the rear; and when all turned their heads to see what was the occasion, who should be there but the bluff Leowulf, dressed quite gaily, attended by the methodic Canute, and four stout iron-workers: he made his way up to Wat, and cried out lustily—

"Here I am, lad, here I am! ho, ho! soon in the old country after you! I don't know how it was, but when you and my bonnie Michael left, I seemed quite alone, felt queer and dull; I missed both of you more than I should have thought possible, so I made up my mind to come after you—ho, ho! not very long in making up my mind when I take anything in my head, ho, ho! Well, I went to the brave Sir Walter, and obtained from him leave of absence: a ship was about to sail from Hennebon, with some gear or Edward's, and I took my passage; was landed after a quick passage at Gravesend, and here I am; ho, ho! arrived before dawn—heard you were going to be married to-day, and swore if ever I had a merry holiday, to-day should be the day—and so it shall; ho, ho! so it shall!"

"I am heartily glad to see you," cried Wat; shaking his hand, warmly.

"And I!" cried Michael, with great glee; "we shall want your roaring spirit to keep us alive when the sun's going down—I am very glad you've come."

"I know it, lads," cried Leowulf, with a rich laugh: "I know it—hurrah! much happiness to you and the fair maidens. Ho, ho! no wonder you were in such a fever to get home—these were treasures, indeed, to sigh after. Nothing like this out of England—is there Wat?"

"No!" cried Wat and Michael, in a breath.

Both Violet and Flora looked meaningly at their lovers, and Flora, turning to Leowulf, said, and with some earnestness too—

"Is there not really?"

"No, indeed," replied Leowulf, while both Michael and Wat laughed heartily. "No, I saw no maidens half so lovely, nor did any one else either, I'll be sworn. Don't stop for me—go on, I can walk by your sides, and talk too."

Accordingly, the cavalcade, which had stopped on his arrival, proceeded. Flora leaned forward to Violet, and whispered quickly—

"You said Fell didn't speak the truth, and you were right—I am so glad, ain't you?"

Violet smiled and nodded her head.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Leowulf, noticing the whisper, and judging something of its purport, "there was no occasion for you to have been afraid that your young husbands here had eyes for anybody else than you. Ho, ho! they shrunk from damsels while they were away from England, as if there was something to be feared from them—some net spread for them into which they should fall and never be able to get free again. It was often remarked, when many of the men were solacing themselves with the society of young lasses, Wat and Michael were seated together, talking sentimentally, or about home, or some other such conversation. Why, I've seen Wat talking to a young maiden, who was doing her best to captivate him, and he would look and speak as solemnly as if he

was talking about the other world with an old granddame; and, as for Michael, he would take the earliest opportunity of getting away, perhaps for fear of accidents. Ho, ho!"

Flora gave Michael a squeeze of the arm, just to show that she approved of his conduct.

Leowulf kept chatting thus agreeably to them until they arrived at the church, and then they all entered a joyous, although a silent throng, and there was the good old priest, who had known them both infants, prepared to unite them for ever in this life, and his assistants were with him, officiating in their respective duties, and the ceremony was begun.

Although the church was crowded, there was not a sound to be heard but the solemn voice of the priest performing the marriage service, which he did most impressively, and when it came to the important part—"With this ring I thee wed," there was a ceremony observed, which, since the time of Edward VI., has been obsolete—namely, that of giving an offering of gold and silver to the bride, which old writers assert to have been a symbol of purchasing the bride, thus, indeed, making the wife the property of the husband; but it appears rather to have been an emblem of endowing the bride with his "goods and chattels," an offering of part of his wealth, for, he says, "thys gold I the geve," making it clearly a *bona-fide* present, and not a mere matter of purchase-money. However, be that as it may, both Wat and Michael had rings, and gold and silver, and were not backward in repeating the words, and making the responses in the clear tones of those who were most earnest and happy in such a ceremony; and if the maidens' tongues faltered in uttering the one word that gave them to the partners of their hearts, it was only from overwrought feelings that they lacked breath to make their tongues heard; and the young damsels wept, too, from sympathy, although in their hearts they longed for their turn to come, as soon as it liked.

At length the ceremony concluded, and they were really married, and Wat fervently kissed his dear wife—she was so now—and didn't Michael kiss Flora, his wife, ha, ha, ha! his wife—to think she really was his wife—to think there really was such happiness in the world; he could scarce believe it, but the ceremony *had* taken place, the ring *was* on her finger, and Flora, the dear, darling little Flora, so long the topmost pinnacle of his love and ambition, *was* his wife, and he would just like to know where there was a bliss that could go beyond it, that was all!

And then the brides and bridegrooms were crowned with flowers. It was the custom to use crowns of costly material, but they dispensed with them, and had neat little crowns woven of the choicest flowers; and when that was done, and the wine was drank, and the nosegays all presented, the cavalcade prepared to return to Halbert's dwelling; and in their return they were by no means so reserved as they had been in their progress to church. There was a vast deal more laughing, far more daring outbreaks in the shape of glances, a decided commencement of slaughtering hearts was made, and havoc and devastation openly attempted; and all this was done in such sunshine, beneath such a blue sky, and with such a setting-in for enjoyment.

They were soon back to Halbert's dwelling, and they soon began to display their happy feelings. There was such wine and cake—such drinking healths, prosperity, and happiness to the brides and bridegrooms—which, by the way, had already been done in the church. And then, after a little while—for the day seemed spiteful enough to intend going very fast—they prepared for dinner: and out in the open air, in all that sunshine and blue sky, they seated themselves to partake of a delightful dinner spread before them. The arrangements were all so good, that everybody feasted to their heart's content, and nobody experienced the slightest inconvenience, or if they did, were amiable enough not to acknowledge it: what there was to eat and drink is a matter of no consequence, but, whatever it was, it was of the best, and there was plenty of it, and, how everybody enjoyed it, although, before they began, they did not feel that they could eat a bit, yet it was surprising what remarkably fine appetites they all displayed. Oh! what talking—talking?—chattering, what laughing, what a glistening of eyes, flashing like polished steel in the sun, what a treading of toes beneath the table, what sly pinches, nods, even winks—we disguise nothing—oh, what joy!

Now are the tables cleared, platters, eatables, everything all gone like magic, not a sign left to show what a dinner they had made. Now commenced the dancing, the sports, the games, the heart of the enjoyment—now in earnest did the havoc begin; young lads danced with young maidens half-a-dozen times in succession, that they had scarce ever spoken to before, and the young maidens liked it so much that they hoped they'd dance with them half-a-dozen times more, and speak to them very often again; how pleased they felt, how they sighed and really knew not why, and how quickly they said "yes, if you please," when the heart-losing youths asked them at the conclusion of one dance if they would dance again with them. How hot it was! but who thought of that, or cared for it?—who danced the less, or scampered here and there the less frequently?—who thought of giving up the game of "kiss in the ring" because it made them so dreadfully warm? Not one!—no, no, it was rather too pleasant for that. Didn't the young damsels pick out nice young men to drop the handkerchief to? and didn't the young men return the compliment? and when a very pretty damsel had the dropping of the kerchief, didn't all the young men look at her "with all their eyes," and wish in their hearts they might find it dropped at their heels? and when the fortunate one got it, wasn't he delighted and the others disappointed? and if it so happened that a maiden had the handkerchief dropped to her by one who was not the young man who kept her company, wasn't she sharply looked after all the while she was chasing him who made her run for the kiss she was to have? and, under *any* circumstances, didn't her sweetheart think she took the salute too quietly, and did he forget to tell her so?

Was there a soul in the village that did not partake of the fun? Even the oldest mixed in some of the sports, for they were very various, and none of them wore the slighest shade of discontent. Even Hermann Hardmann, who had really loved Flora, was there with a damsel, and dressed in his gayest smiles, only that as the maiden was a shade the merriest disposition, and was not so right down in love with him that another might not have succeeded in winning her affection, he kept very close to her, suffered nobody to dance with her, laugh at, or talk to her but himself, and had scarce time to look at Flora, whose marriage a few years previous would have been death to him. He was fortunate that there was no swain possessing greater personal charms than himself paying his love particular attention, or he might not have worn a brow free from vexation or discontent.

Halbert Evesham, with his beloved Ghita, looked on this delightful scene with a pleasure that made them ever and anon bear glistening eyes, suffused

with the tears of joy. And were not Wat's parents proud and happy! and did Michael's mother think there was in that numerous assembly a youth to compare to her dear boy; and could Flora's father and mother, have been happier! And Wat and Violet, and Flora and Michael, all mixed in the sports; and wer'n't the bridesmaids proud of their brides, and the bridegrooms' grooms equally so of their bridegrooms! How hard they did all work at their pleasure, and were so thirsty, and drank and drank, water and wine, and wine and water, ale, and mead, and yet were never the worse for it. And what racing, what romping, what jumping, laughing, hallooing, and what love-making! Did not the maidens appear gracious, and were not the youths attentive! Was there ever such an afternoon passed?

And then how beautiful it was to see the moon, whlle it was yet broad day, begin to peep over the horizon! to think, too, it should be just at the full, as if everything that could add to the happiness was propitious. And then, before the curfew had tolled, were not those tressels making the long table brought forth again, and was there not a repast laid, and did not everybody sit down and eat as if nothing had that day passed their lips! and then were there not toasts and healths drank, and speeches made—"for in those days they did those things"—and was there not hurrahing, and shouting, and all sorts of enthusiasm! And were they not up again and ready for more dancing, more racing, more romping, and more kissing? Were they one jot tired? Not they!

And the same things were enacted in the evening as had been done in the afternoon; there was the same mirth, the same festivity, the same joy, hilarity, and happiness; everbody was engaged in some pleasant pastime; nobody thought of leaving off. The sun went down, but there was the moon looking brighter and brighter every inch the sun descended, and making the place all around look most lovely in its soft cool light; and was there not more love-making than ever, and were not those who had resolved upon conquest successful? Ah! many on that day found a husband among the revellers. Many a youth who had cast a loving and a longing eye upon some fair damsel, took heart during the course of that happy day to whisper his admiration, his tender predilection for her, and found that "fortune favors the brave." And although there was so much dancing going on, so many games of forfeit and fun proceeding, were there not a number of "twos" wandering gently away, talking low, and looking unutterable things? And were not some discovered kissing on the sly! and were there not roars of laughter attending the discovery? But, oh! what was best of all, was there not Leowulf discovered making very strong love to a young damsel—was he not handed out—was he not joked—was he not baited and bantered—and did he not take it in very good part? And was it in their power to make him quit the maiden, or the maiden to quit him? No! She was very pretty, that was more, and she liked his honest frankness: he might be bluff, perhaps rough, but he could be gentle, and could wield his tongue in a maiden's ear—so it appeared—as dexterously as he could his bonny five foot of fire-proved steel about the head of a foe. The maiden had found favor in his sight—he had in hers; it was no great desire on her part for a husband that affected her well towards him, for her beauty would have commanded her a hundred to choose from; but there was something in Leowulf's manner and character that charmed her, and though she blushed violently when there was such an outcry made at the soft things the bold smith had said to her, yet she was not shamed out of her choice, and did not intend to suffer herself to be, for she believed him every way worthy of it—and so he was.

All things must have an end (save a circle), and so must this day. The moon was high in the heavens, and all the old people had retired to their homes and their beds; the young ones were compelled to follow their example; then there was such bidding "good byes," such partings, such tender squeezes of the hands, such whisperings of assignation in the ears of those who held their heads down, but listened attentively; nevertheless, such extorted promises of meeting again, and with such earnest intentions of keeping the promise, such reiterated acknowledgments that it had been the happiest day of their lives—from all, such regrets that the day was over, and it had not to come again to-morrow; such really last words and last kisses, until the door did actually hide the smiling, shining face, and the maiden retired sighing to her couch, and the youth took his slow way, staring the moon out of countenance, and not feeling in the smallest degree as if he was of "earth, earthy."

It was a very, very happy day!—happy indeed for those in whose honor the festivity was made!—happy for those who partook of it!—happy in its morn, its midday, its night! To the young it brought and gave delight; to the old, the pure enjoyment of witnessing the unsophisticated, unalloyed happiness of their offspring. It was one clear day out of a life—the brightest and greenest spot the memory, at the end of a long sojourn on earth, could furnish—the gladness of years compressed into one brief day—a day of joy that made life LIFE.

In after years, when merry days were remembered and talked about, it was always the habit of those who had been there, to exclaim, "Ah, do you remember Wat Tyler's wedding day?—there has been nothing like that, before or since."

CHAPTER IX.

"The King received intelligence from different countries, especially from Gascony. * * * The King soon afterward appointed his cousin, the Earl of Derby, leader of this expedition.

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"This day the English dined early, and during the repast Sir Walter Manny, addressing himself to the Earl of Derby, said, 'My lord, if we were good knights, and well armed, we might this evening partake of the wine of these French lords who are in garrison in Bergerac.' The Earl answered 'that it should not be his fault if he did not.'

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"The Earl of Derby then, accompanied by Sir Walter Manny and the forces he had with him, took the road to Auberoche as secretly as possible.

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"At last Sir Walter Manny said, 'Gentlemen, let us who are now here mount our horses and advance until we come to their camp.'

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"All those who were of the Count de Lisle's party, were either taken prisoners or slain.

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"This brought forward an old man, who said to Sir Walter Manny, 'Certainly, sir, I think I can lead you to the place where your father was buried, or very near to it.'

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"The old man remembered all these circumstances perfectly well, for he had been present when the lord of Manny was interred. When Sir Walter came to the spot where his father had been formerly buried, he found there a small tomb of marble.

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"Lord Thomas crossed the bridge of Chauvigny, having left Sir John Chandos quite low spirited.

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"He continued in the kitchen of the hotel, warming himself at a straw fire which his herald was making for him, conversing at the same time with his people, who very readily passed their jokes, in hopes of curing him of his melancholy.

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"Sir John Chandos was disarmed very gently by his own servants—laid upon their shields and targets, and carried at a foot's pace to Mortemer, the nearest fort to the place where they were; the other barons and knights returned to Poictiers, carrying with their prisoners. 'I heard that James Martin, he who had wounded Sir John Chandos, suffered so much from his wounds, that he died at Poictiers. That gallant knight only survived one day and night; God have mercy on his soul! for never since a hundred years did there exist among the English, one more courteous, nor fuller of every virtue and good quality than him.'"

FROISSART'S CHRONICLES.

WAT's anticipations of happiness in wedding Violet were all realised to him; she was all that he could have desired; and he was to her everything which her fondest speculations could have conceived; and well might they each indulge in expectations of years to come of perfect felicity. But man's life is a series of vicissitudes.

"One man in his time plays many parts,"

saith the poet, who read human hearts and actions with unerring truth; and Wat lived to see changes and scenes he never dreamed of.

His first care, when married, was to build for himself and Violet a cottage, which should contain every imaginable comfort. He easily obtained a grant of land from Edward, and speedily raised a little dwelling, which embodied every improvement of the period. It was situated near Halbert's, upon a rising ground, and overlooked the village, the surrounding country, and the church were they were wedded; and here they passed their time very happily. Often, when the evenings were clear and serene, they would sit beneath an old oak, which fronted their dwelling, regarding each other as affectionately, and with the same lovingness as when they were yet unwedded. Their chief study seemed to be how they could make the day pass happily to each other; and as their efforts were no less earnest than sincere, their hours were passed as free from care or pain as it is possible for hours to be passed out of Heaven. They had everything to make them happy, and had a shade of annoyance come near them, they would have taken no note of it, but still persevered in drawing joy and content from all that transpired. In Michael and Flora they found constant companions and most affectionate friends: and in their respective parents guides and counsellors, who made precept and instruction as delightful as it was wise and good.

Michael, ever ready to follow Wat's example, contrived to rear for himself a dwelling similar to Wat's; to stock it as his was stocked, and to manage it in the same fashion. The ground they each possessed was rich and fertile, and they had each labourers, who brought it speedily into a high state of cultivation, and thus they commenced their marriage state with every prospect of being not only wealthy, but happy men; the contiguity of their dwellings, the similarity of their tastes and habits, their old and very dear friendship, made them ever together, and many a long hour was made short and pleasant by their tales of adventure in which they had both been actors—their descriptions of scenes and places they had witnessed, and people with whom they had been thrown in contact; and so hour after hour, day after day, glided on, bringing them the purest, unmixed felicity.

A twelvemonth passed away, and found them each a father to a sweet smiling child, and each, in so much, the happier; and while they were yet congratulating each other upon the happy event, there arrived two visitors, who were both welcomed and honored guests: they were no less than Sir Walter Manny and Sir John Chandos. They had both been commanded to England by the King, and the latter had been just installed a Knight of the Garter, being one of the first knights who bore that distinction, with the origin of which every one is acquainted. They were warmly welcomed, and proudly entertained, at least so far as the heart assisted the means to do them honor, and they could easily perceive it, and lost no opportunity of displaying that the kindness was not thrown away upon them. Sir Walter Manny received the gift which had so long been promised to him, and what his feelings were upon receiving it might not be known from his demeanour, save that he uttered his acknowledgments in terms of thankfulness, which showed he deeply prized the present; but if he felt heart sore and low in spirit that his eyes had seen enough to completely dispel every hope, however slight and frail, which he might have entertained of making Violet his, he did not let either her or Wat see it. His heart was pained, his spirit was oppressed and heavy, and in the secret recesses of his soul he was sad and joyless, to see her whom he had loved with such a high devotion, such pure affection, the wife of another—never, never to be his. But his face wore a smile of content, his words were of the same warm fervent character they had been in his happiest hours, and no one could have judged—least of all her whose beauty had occasioned it—that while he seemed most pleased in hearing of their felicity

his heart ached with agony to think such happiness was for ever denied to him.

John Chandos was much changed. To those who had known him ere he had met with Rubacelle, the laughing, light, gay, reckless youth he was, the alteration was indeed great. In place of his ruddy face, his laughing eye, and ever-smiling mouth, he was pale, thoughtful, and seldom seen to suffer his features to warm into an exhibition of mirthful feelings; his heart was buried in the grave of the ill-fated maiden he had loved, and it was not in the power of any scenes or occurrences to resuscitate it, and make it joyous.

"It is useless, friend Wat," he said to our hero, when he once, soon after his arrival in Brenchley, expostulated with him upon his sadness, "to urge me to wear a joy I cannot feel—to show a happy contentedness of which my heart knows no touch. It may be a womanly weakness, no less than a paradox, that I, a soldier, formed of all the rude materials furnished by a camp, war and turmoil, should stand thus affected by the loss of one who loved me not; who, had she lived, would never have been mine. This may be—it is, perhaps, singular, but I care not, I seek not to know why it is—I desire not to know; I know only she was my heart, the impulse of my being—she is gone, and I am left a mere moving machine."

"You were not thus ere you met with her," replied Wat; "you had high hopes, high resolves, high ambition—why should you throw all these aside because one object has vanished?"

"When I entered Edward's service," replied John Chandos, "my heart was light, open to the strongest impression, teeming with enthusiasm; my nature was ardent and impetuous, and as the excitement of war was the most moving, most stirring scene I had hitherto been engaged in, I entered into it with, as I thought, all the spirit my nature was capable of. I was mistaken; my first interview with Rubacelle, and my subsequent acquaintance with her, proved I had not met previously the object upon which my whole soul would centre and settle, and I soon discovered by giving, as I had always done, my heart and thoughts the rein, that I had so completely delivered my heart to her, that she alone was the pinnacle of my high hopes, high resolves, high ambition. I indulged in the blissful dream with all the sanguine expectations it is the peculiarity of my temperament to possess; I identified her with every wish, every thought and anticipation; I looked upon her as already mine, before I thought of asking; no thought contrary ever intruded upon me, and when I discovered that all these fond expectations were entertained in vain, every other feeling was swept away before the torrent of anguish and disappointment it occasioned. Well, well, it was to be, and it has been; there is a consolation that it can never be again, and, to a certain extent, I have resigned myself to my fate. I am not as dull, nor do I carry my features as a whining monk. I still do my duty as a preux chevalier should; I can fight with as much ardour as of old, perhaps with greater, from a greater recklessness of death than ever, and my bearing is as erect, my conduct as soldier-like, as when first you knew me. If I am not the same lounging, rattling, careless fellow, I am no driveller, so that the change is but little noticed, save that I have heard myself charged by the men as being more sedate and stern than before; but as these are soldier-like qualities," he added, with a faint smile, "they esteem themselves gainers by the change. Let us pursue this subject no further," he continued, with a graver countenance, and at the same time giving Wat's hand a powerful squeeze, "my lot is marked out for me—I shall fall upon the field, and that probably ere long; but this I feel, that when I part with thee here in Brenchley, Wat Tyler, we shall never meet again, unless it please God our re-union should be in Heaven."

They never did meet again.

He turned away as he uttered the words, and waving his hand for Wat not to follow him, strolled into the village.

The stay of the two knights in Brenchley was short, for Edward's ambition had cut out work for them upon the Continent; but they staid long enough to stand sponsors for the two children—Sir Walter Manny godfather to Violet's, and Sir John Chandos to Flora's, and then they took their leave.

As Wat's condition continued one interrupted course of felicity for many years, and as every year brought one round of calm joy, it was barren of all incident, save that he continued to be beloved and looked up to by every one in the village with respect and honor; but as our narrative is drawing to a close, it is necessary not to quit either Sir Walter Manny or Sir John Chandos, without referring to the many brilliant achievements they each performed while Wat was passing his time in quiet happiness, until the time when he should again become so remarkable and extraordinary an actor in stirring scenes—scenes which connect his name with history of a character so opposite to those in which he had formerly mixed.

Upon the arrival of the two knights in London, they presented themselves before the King, and he welcomed them right handsomely. He was just about to give a grand entertainment at Windsor Castle, and they accompanied him thither. He made magnificent preparations for it, and it took place in the most splendid style—the festivities and tilts lasting a fortnight.

Just as this gorgeous entertainment concluded, ambassadors arrived from Gascony, praying his aid, stating that the country was in a miserably weak condition—exposed to the attacks of the enemy, and, in particular, the fine city of Bordeaux; they therefore requested earnestly of him to send them assistance in the shape of men and arms. Edward readily granted it; he gave the command of the expedition to his cousin the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter Manny, with three hundred knights and squires—Sir John Chandos he retained for other service—six hundred men-at-arms and two thousand archers, and they departed instantly for Bayonne; they reached there in due time, and after remaining there seven days, departed for Bordeaux, where they were joyfully met and welcomed by a splendid procession of the townspeople. They took up their quarters there for a short time, and the Count de Lisle, who had command of the French, and from being unopposed by any foreign power, was "like a king in Gascony," hearing of their arrival, summoned a council of his lords and knights, and prepared by their advice to resist the further progress of the English, and accordingly posted themselves to defend a passage of the river Dordogne, at Bergerac, and awaited their coming.

The Earl of Derby remained with his people at Bordeaux for fifteen days, in order that his men might, being in such good quarters, be thoroughly recruited, and enter upon their work fresh and with good spirits; and learning at the expiration of this time that the French, and such Gascons as sided with them, were all safe in Bergerac, he gave the order for departing to attack them. They set forth in fine marching order, and reached a castle favorable to the English, named Monteroullier, a short league from Bergerac; here they stayed for a day and a night

while they sent out scouts to the barriers of the town to reconnoitre and ascertain the position of the foe. Sir Walter Manny learning from some of his own people, whom he had sent, that they were not posted in such a formidable manner but what they could be ousted, instantly resolved that if it were possible to drive them out, it should not be long ere it was accomplished. It so happened that they dined early that day, and while the meal was proceeding, report was made of the position of the French and Gascons to the Earl of Derby. Sir Walter immediately took an opportunity of advising an immediate attack upon them.

"We have everything in our favor, my lord," he cried, "the day is fine, we are but a small distance from them; the men have dined, and if we are good men and true, we will this evening partake of the wines of these French lords who are in garrison at Bergerac."

"You cannot be more eager to advance upon and conquer our enemies than am I, Sir Walter," exclaimed the Earl, "and therefore, if we do not pledge each other in a goblet of their wine to-night, it shall not be my fault; so, my bold knight, and you, Sir Frank Van Halle," he continued, addressing one of his marshals, "will see that as soon as dinner has concluded, the men are under arms, and ready for instant march."

"Right gladly shall you be obeyed, my noble lord," replied Sir Walter Manny; "hey! for the roar and excitement of a battle-field again."

"The field of glory seems to be your only sphere of life and action," said the Earl; you are seldom so joyous and light-hearted as when you are lance-in-rest, and dashing at the enemy."

"There is no scene which gives such pleasure to my heart as a well-contested field," replied Sir Walter, animatedly; "it makes every nerve in my my heart throb with mad delight, and it drowns unpleasant remembrances."

"You can have but few unpleasant remembrances that it will take the excitement of a battle-field to banish?" said the Earl, interrogatively.

"Most men have some point in their history, some disappointment, they would gladly seek some stirring action to drive from their memory; I have mine!"

"You have!" replied the Earl. "Why, Sir Walter, I have known you from a youth, and have been constantly at your side; I see not one recollection but what should bring you the proudest satisfaction."

"Still I have a recollection that is painful, that I am glad to drown; it is a sorrow that is secret—and sacred," replied Sir Walter, with marked emphasis upon his last words.

The Earl bowed, and instantly, without the smallest appearance of being offended, changed the conversation.

The dinner was concluded. Sir Walter Manny, attended by Sir Frank Van Halle, summoned the knights, squires, the archers, and men-at-arms, and communicated the orders of the Earl, and most joyfully was it greeted; every one made instant preparation, and in a few minutes they were all assembled, and ready for departure. The Earl of Derby was delighted to see the eagerness which his followers displayed, and augured well of the expedition; he leaped into his saddle, and, waving his sword, he cried to his men,—

"In the name of God and of St. George let us march to our enemies!"

The men answered him with a loud shout, and they pressed forward; they were not long, although the afternoon was insufferably hot, in reaching the barriers of Bergerac. The town was surrounded with a part of the river Dordogne, which rendered it difficult of access; but the French lords, perceiving them advance, and that their numbers were not of any great magnitude, immediately assembled in battle array, and attended by a multitude of foot-soldiers and country people badly armed, they sallied forth to meet them.

The English advanced in close order and made not a single demonstration of attack, until the French had poured through the bars, and over the bridge, extending in complicated masses along the road, shouting and hallooing, with the gallant intent of frightening away their foes by their cries; but the English only laughed, and waited patiently for the Earl of Derby's orders to commence the attack, and immediately he saw a favorable opportunity he gave the command to the archers, and they poured forth such a terrific shower of arrows as quite to paralyse the Gascons and French; this discharge was continued so hard and fast, that the enemy were thrown into confusion, and then the English lords, putting spurs to their steeds, dashed into the thickest of the fray, and committed terrible slaughter.

The first and foremost among them was Sir Walter Manny, who had that day hoisted a new banner of the richest silk and the fairest workmanship. Every one noticed it, remarked the singular glow of the features and compression of the hand upon the lance of Sir Walter as he first raised it; they saw the expression of his eyes as he regarded it, and without seeking to know from whom it came, or what associations were connected with it, they were satisfied that it would lead the way to the most desperate part of the fight—would wave wherever danger was thickest, and flutter a signal of victory. So simple a thing as this had an influence not to be described, and they rushed to the field with the confidence and assurance of men who saw triumph in their grasp. They drove the French and Gascons before them in crowds; the men-at-arms, backed by the French knights, essayed to make a stand, but in vain; the road was blocked up by their own runaways, who were so possessed with fright, that they slaughtered their own friends rather than have their flight impeded; with such confusion as this, it was utterly impossible to make any stand, and they everywhere gave ground, retreating to the suburbs. They were followed closely, and numbers were cut down and slain; the bridge and bars were carried by storm, the English entering pellmell, led on by Sir Walter Manny, who was the first to enter the barriers.

The slaughter was tremendous, and the number of prisoners captured was exceedingly great. The French were soon beaten out of the suburbs, and retreated upon the town; they had another bridge to cross, and here again the fight was hot and desperate. The French, still superior in numbers, made strenuous efforts to retrieve the loss they had already suffered, but in vain; the bright banner of Sir Walter hung upon their rear, and where it waved, fierce war, blood, and death, raged beneath it.

The Viscount de Bosquetin, the lords of Châtillon, of Chateauneuf, and of Lescun, all lords high in command in the French army, were taken prisoners, and passed to the rear, while the Count de Lisle and his people were sore pressed towards the fort; then, after yielding the bridge, they retreated in all haste, and, with the exception of a few of the less expert, who were taken prisoners or slain, they entered the fort, and with all speed lowered the portcullis, shutting out the English, who battered at the gates until the French, from the battlements, threw down huge

stones and other missives, which compelled them to retire, as they were losing men without a prospect of gaining any advantage by remaining. They returned to the suburbs, "where they found such quantities of provision and wine, that might, on occasion, have lasted them for four months most plentifully."

The next day, an attack was made upon the castle, which lasted until noon, but without effect; and the English retired again to the suburbs. Sir Walter Manny remembered how Wat Tyler had carried Didant by storm; and getting a boat, he caused himself to be rowed along the river which surrounded the town, to see whether it could not be attacked from the water side. He saw a strong palisade, protected by some stout piles, which appeared to him to offer a means of entrance of less difficulty than the one they had already essayed, and he returned and stated this conviction to the Earl of Derby, who, placing great reliance on his judgment, readily consented to attack it in that fashion, and despatched messengers to Bordeaux, to the fleet stationed there, to send him as many vessels as they could spare up the Dordogne to Bergerac, which was instantly complied with. And when the fleet was manned and ready, it made for the palisades. The piles were soon flung down, and the palisades were attacked.

The French, however, did not advance to arrest their labours; and a deputation of townspeople, in a state of tribulation and fright, waited upon the Count de Lisle, begging him to understand it was necessary that he should be very careful what he was about; that if the town was carried by storm, they should lose all they possessed, and be ruined; that they, therefore, thought it much better to surrender the town to the Earl of Derby, and trust to his mercy, having often heard of his clemency; but the Count de Lisle, who had hitherto had it all his own way in Gascony, conquering and pillaging towns, taking castles and forts, did not like so lightly surrendering a town, out of which so much was to be pillaged, and he, therefore, replied that he would with his followers advance upon the place attacked, and drive back the foe. He gathered his troops together, and marched to the spot; he found the English as busy as bees in a hive, all engaged in trying to make a breach in the palisades, and they fired upon them; but the English pursued their work, as if there were only so many flies darting about them, instead of arrows and bolts. The English archers, however, advanced to their assistance, and compelled the French and Gascons to retire; but the latter had in their pay some three hundred Genoese cross-bowmen, who were clad in armour, and very expert in the use of their weapons, but they could not cope with the English archers; they stood their ground manfully, but their numbers were terribly thinned by the accuracy of the aim of the former; and they gave ground, suffering the English to persevere in their attack of the palisades, in which they ultimately succeeded in making a breach; and, as they were pouring in, a truce was demanded, and the enemy begged a time to consider whether they should not surrender the place. The remainder of the day and night was allowed them, upon the condition that they did not make any effort to repair the breach. They consented, and in the night held a council, when the motion for surrendering was so unanimous that it saved them much trouble of discussing; but the Gascon and French lords immediately packed up their baggage, and with their soldiers, in the dead of night, marched to La Rèole, a town of the Bazadois, on the Garonne, not very far distant from Bergerac, and took up their quarters there.

By sunrise in the morning the English were at the palisades, ready to carry on the attack, but they were met by a large body of the townspeople, who, in abject terms, offered to surrender up the town, and begged piteously of the knights to entreat the Earl of Derby to have mercy on them. The gallant Sir Walter Manny undertook to plead their cause, which he did so effectually, assisted by the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Oxford, that the Earl consented, and said—

"He who begs for mercy shall have mercy shown him. Tell them to open their gates and let us enter, when we will assure them of safety from us and our people."

This speech was conveyed to them, and the people were nearly wild with delight. They all assembled in the market-place. They rang the bells joyfully, and then, in long procession, opened the gates, and conducted the Earl and his followers to the church, where they swore fealty to him on behalf of the King of England, to whom they vowed to be true and loyal for evermore.

After a short sojourn in Bergerac, the Earl, with all his followers, departed towards Perigord and Upper Gascony, and the first place they arrived at was a strong castle named Langon. It was of too much importance to leave in his rear, and he resolved to capture it, which, after two days' struggle, he succeeded in doing. He left in it a squire named Aymon Lyon, and gave him thirty archers to enable him to keep possession of it. He then made to a town called Le Lac, intending to assault it, but the townspeople had no disposition to resist him, so they met him with the keys of the town, and swore homage to him. He went on till he came to Mandarant, which he carried by storm, and leaving a garrison there, he pushed on and came before the castle of Montgis, which, through the brilliant gallantry of Sir Walter Manny, he won by assault. The knight took the governor prisoner, and he was sent to Bordeaux. He then marched to Punich, which he conquered, passed on to the castle and town of Lieux, which, after an obstinate resistance, he added to his conquests, and here he remained to refresh his men for three days. Again he departed, and attacked and carried by storm the towns of Forsath and Pondaire, and then arrived before a town of considerable magnitude, Beaumont en Laillois, a dependency of the Count de Lisle. It was full of men, and in no want of ammunition or provision, and the defenders were gallant men. For three days the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter Manny kept up an unremitting assault, the noble knight doing deeds which made his very enemies admire his bravery and his prowess, and his own men fight with an energy which overcame everything. At last the indomitable spirit and perseverance of the English prevailed, and Sir Walter, at the head of his men, entered the town amidst a hurricane of arrows, bolts, and deadly missives. The garrison fought madly, but they were in all parts beaten, and the slaughter that ensued, for they disdained quarter, was awful. However, Sir Walter's banner once more waved over its victorious owner, and the town surrendered.

While their blood was hot, and the excitement of war rife in all hearts, the Earl would not lose any time so that it might cool; he, therefore, recruited his men with fresh troops as speedily as possible, and then made with all speed to the principal town of the inheritance of the Count de Lisle. It was exceedingly extensive, and under the command of two brothers, Lords Philip and Arnold de Dyon, who bore a high character as chivalric knights. The English on all

sides invested it, and under cover of a tremendous fire of their own archers, they advanced upon the barriers, which they soon conquered, and gained every place until they reached the town gates. Evening had then arrived, and they desisted; but in the morning the attack was renewed in several places at once; Sir Walter Manny cheered on his men, and was already, under a most determined and sanguinary resistance, gaining admission into the part of the town he attacked, when a herald sounded a truce.

The townspeople found the engagement too hot for their welfare, and therefore requested of two knights to treat for a peace. They advanced, and stated their desire to see the Earl of Derby—a request which was conveyed to him; and guessing its purport, he ordered his men to retire, and advanced, accompanied by Sir Walter Manny and the Lord Stafford, alone, to confer with these two knights. The Earl demanded unconditional surrender, which the knights were not disposed to grant; but after some discussion, the town agreed to pay homage to "the King of England as Duke of Guienne, and that twelve of the principal citizens should be sent as hostages to Bordeaux." When this point was settled, the French knights and squires were granted passports, and they immediately left the town, and hastened to join their companions in Le Rèole.

Several more towns and castles were captured by the Earl of Derby and Sir Walter Manny subsequent to those already mentioned, the principal of which was a strong handsome town and castle, belonging to the Archbishop of Toulouse, named Auberoche; and then, having left a garrison in it under the command of Sir Frank Van Halle, and two other knights, he besieged a town named Libourne, which surrendered to him. He left the Lord Stafford in command of this place, despatched the Earl of Pembroke to Bergerac, and himself, accompanied by Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Oxford, returned to Bordeaux.

No sooner did the Count de Lisle learn that his forces were thus divided, and he in Bordeaux, in all probability intending to remain there without prosecuting any further expeditions that season, he wrote letters to all the Gascon lords in the French interest, to arm as many men as they could gather together, and meet him upon a certain day before Auberoche, which he intended to besiege. His wishes were complied with, and he began the siege with ten thousand men. The town and castle was so completely surrounded, there was no opportunity of despatching intelligence to the Earl of Derby of the condition the garrison was in; and Sir Frank Van Halle resolved to die rather than surrender. The number they had to defend the castle with was very small, and provisions began to grow scarce; their situation became desperate, and it was at length necessary that the Earl should know how they were circumstanced.

A large reward was offered for any one who would attempt to convey letters to him; and a gallant fellow offered, not for the sake of the reward, but with the hope of bringing succour to his fellow sufferers. Accordingly, in the dead of the night, with the letters secreted on his person, he was lowered from the walls, and began threading his way through the enemy's army, for there was no other road; he was stopped by a sentinel, but speaking the Gascon language fluently, he mentioned a noble of the army, and was permitted to proceed. But as he drew into the heart of the encampment, he was stopped again, and interrogated so closely, that he was unable to carry on the disguise; he was arrested, searched, the letters were discovered, and in the morning he was brought before the Count de Lisle, who, having read the letters, discovered for the first time to what a strait the garrison was reduced; he was rejoiced mightily, and with brutal barbarism ordered the poor fellow who had attempted to convey the letters to have them fastened round his neck, and then be thrust into one of the machines for hurling massive stones, and flung into the castle. The horrible order was instantly obeyed, and the miserable wretch was thrown into the fortress, and fell dead at the feet of a number of soldiers who were upon the walls. Several of the French nobles then galloped to the walls, upon which Sir Frank Van Halle was standing, looking with mournful aspect upon the poor fellow who had perished thus miserably, and they cried, tauntingly,—

"What says your messenger? Is he not a speedy one? Where found he the Earl of Derby? Is his lordship prepared to assist you?"

"Base, cowardly miscreants!" roared Sir Frank, "the proudest among ye, were the Earl and gallant Sir Walter Manny here, would shrink like frighted curs; the bravest and best among ye would be afraid to stand your ground. Dare ye send to inform the Earl, and stand battle with him, cowards?"

"We fear the Earl nor the mighty Sir Walter Manny no more than we do you," was the reply.

"Lying slaves! cowardly, sneaking dogs!" shouted the knight, in a paroxysm of rage, "you would tremble and shiver with affright and horror, knew ye that they were within five leagues of ye, boasting hounds! Why, an' ye dare to send a messenger to him, I 'swear you shall have a hostage from these walls as high in rank as any here, even though it be myself."

"No! no!" cried the Frenchmen, derisively, "the Earl shall know when the walls are levelled with the ground, and every one of you have surrendered in abject servility to save your lives, even upon your knees."

"Judge not of us by yourselves," returned the knight, "we are resolved to die on the walls rather than surrender. We are men who find it easier to die, than be the slaves ye are."

The Frenchmen, stung with rage, retorted acrimoniously, and were taunted so bitterly by Sir Frank, that in a desperate fury they returned to the army, set their engines to work, and poured into the castle one storm of stones, breaking the roofs of the towers and houses, so that every one was compelled to seek shelter in the lowest chambers of the buildings, but still there was no signs of surrender.

It happened that in the French army there was a spy in the pay of the Earl of Derby, and as soon as he had an opportunity he made the Earl acquainted with all that had transpired, and the Earl instantly prepared to set out for the relief. He was short of men, and sent to the Earl of Pembroke and Lord Stafford to meet him at Libourne. He speedily reached there, and met the Lord Stafford, but the Earl of Pembroke did not arrive, although they waited the whole day. They then pushed forward, and left orders for him to follow them immediately he arrived, and on the morrow they came within two leagues of Auberoche. They alighted on the borders of an extensive wood, and here again waited for the Earl of Pembroke, but noon arrived and he did not make his appearance; they were in doubt what to do, for he had the bulk of the army with him; they only numbered three hundred lances and six hundred archers, and the Earl of Pembroke had four thousand archers with him. The Earl of Derby knew that the French numbered between ten and twelve thousand

men, and deemed it madness, with the handful he had with him, to attack; but Sir Walter Manny did not like the idea of being so near their friends, and doing nothing to help them; he argued that every one of their followers was equal to a dozen of the enemy, and at that computation the forces were equal.

"Besides," he added, "these French and Gascons know nothing of our proximity; they will be at supper about the time we reach them; our sudden attack will throw them into confusion, and make the victory easy and certain. Now, my brave companions," he cried, turning to his followers, "ye see my banner; beneath it I will never suffer defeat: I will always conquer or perish, and I will at once depart for these Frenchmen, if I go alone, and strike a blow for the relief of those who are cooped up desparingly within the walls of Auberoche. Who will follow me?"

"All!" cried the Earl of Derby, with sudden enthusiasm, "to the death!"

The men shouted joyously, and regirthing their horses, fastening their armour, they remounted and followed Sir Walter Manny cheerfully, though it had been to death. They went on very silently until they arrived near the outskirts of the wood, and a small cleft showed them the camps of the enemy. As Sir Walter had anticipated, the enemy were seated at supper, and the men were dispersed in all directions, feasting and singing, quite unconscious of the proximity of a foe. Sir Walter and his people drew on noiselessly until they were quite to the edge of the wood, and a few more paces would disclose them to the French, and then displaying their pennons and banners, they stuck spurs to their horses, and followed Sir Walter, who was the first to dash into the midst of them, shouting—

"Derby, Derby for ever!"

"Derby, Derby—a Manny, a Manny to the rescue," shouted his followers, and poured in upon the devoted enemy, overthrowing pavilions, and cutting and slaying all before them. The French were thrown into frightful confusion, and fled in all directions towards the plains; but no sooner did a large body collect than the cross-bowmen and archers poured in such a heavy fire they fell in hundreds, and the rest fled. The Count de Lisle and a long train of lords were taken prisoners, and just ere the victory was gained, Sir Frank Van Halle, seeing from the walls this sudden and unexpected arrival of succour, was almost overcome with joy. He marshalled his men, and sallied from the gates of the fortress to assist his friends, and dashed into the midst of the fray, thus making the victory complete. Thus was a most brilliant conquest achieved with but one thousand men, including all Sir Frank Halle's, over ten thousand, and only through the bravery and enterprise of Sir Walter Manny. The Earl of Pembroke arrived next morning in great vexation that he had been too late; but the Earl of Derby soothed him, and once more, after leaving a strong garrison in the town, he returned to Bordeaux, where the inhabitants received him and Sir Walter Manny with great acclamations and joy. Several months were then suffered to elapse until the following Easter, when the Earl of Derby attempted to attack La Rèole, which was the stronghold of the French, and gathered all knights, men-at-arms, and archers, to the number of three thousand, and departed on their expedition. On their way they took towns and castles, after determined struggles and resistance, all adding to the subjection of Gascony, until they came to La Rèole.

This place was very extensive, well fortified, and well provided with men, provisions, and ammunition, and bid fair to cause a vast deal of time and labour to conquer. For nine weeks the English were before it, never suffering a day to pass without assaulting it, and still it held out; every approach to it was so guarded that no provision or succour could reach it, nor any one quit its walls. Two enormous towers were erected of wood three stories in height, and were covered over with prepared leather to resist fire or arrows. Each of the stories contained an hundred archers, and the whole fabric was placed upon wheels and driven close to the walls; then men were placed between these two towers with pickaxes and bars, and soon effected a breach, through which the English in little time began to pour, and then the inhabitants begged of the governor to surrender, hinting, if he did not, they would. The governor was a brave man, but seeing that the inhabitants were resolved, and no efforts of his could prevent them, he called off his men, and retired to a tall castle which was built upon a rock, and overlooked the town, and vowed he would hold it out to the last, but the townspeople might do as they pleased with the town; they accordingly gave up the keys to Sir Walter Manny—whose fame was ever before him, whose gentleness and mercy in peace were as well known as his fierceness in war. The Earl of Derby received the keys from the knight, entered with the whole of his army, and immediately invested the castle. It was built by the Saracens, and the foundation was so enormously strong, and the masonry of such singular workmanship, that the process of undermining it, by which the Earl of Derby purposed carrying it, proceeded but slowly.

While lying before it, the miners only employed, Sir Walter resolved to set at rest a question that had long haunted him. His father, in a journey from St. James of Compostella, had been foully murdered, and buried privately, somewhere in the neighbourhood of La Rèole. Sir Walter was an infant when this took place, and he had no opportunity of learning more of the matter than the above. It had often been a source of anxiety, and now it seemed he should be able to ascertain everything connected with it; he made every inquiry, but was bitterly disappointed to find that all of whom he made inquiries knew nought of the matter. He then offered a reward of one hundred crowns to any one who could relate to him any fact connected with it, and one morning, Mark Grayling, who had occupied Wat's place about his person, brought to him a very old man, saying that he could furnish the desired information. Sir Walter sprung up joyfully, seized the old man's hand, and led him to a seat, and said, with much anxiety and eagerness—

"You can tell me of my father's fate?"

"You are then the renowned Sir Walter Manny?" exclaimed the old man, in a feeble tone of voice.

"I am he," replied Sir Walter, quickly. "What know you of my father?"

"Much, very much," said the old man; "I was in his service when he came to this faithless place, and I have remained here ever since his shameful death."

"My good old man," replied Sir Walter, "your information will indeed be valuable; trust me, you shall be well rewarded. To thy story, for I am impatient until I know all connected with him."

"You shall know all," replied the old man, "but first let me look upon thy face, that my old eyes may be gladdened by the sight of the child of him I loved so much, who was so high, so noble, so brave. Ah!" he added, bending his dim eyes in earnest perusal of Sir Walter's features, "thou'rt indeed the son of the Lord of Manny; there is the same high forehead, the

same clear bright eye, the same manly and noble features that he bore—God rest his soul! Now shall I die happy, that I have looked on his offspring, seen him one of the highest and noblest in the land. I have prayed for him, and Heaven has granted my prayer, and the green turf may wave over me as soon as it list—it will lay lightly—it will lay lightly."

"But how met my father his death?" asked Sir Walter, gently, seeing that the tears ran down the old man's cheeks, but was so anxious to learn what he could communicate, he could not resist putting the question.

"You shall know all," replied the old man, "listen. Your father was, as you have heard, a brave and gallant chevalier, whose fame extended through Hainault, as thine does over the world. Well, a Bishop of Cambray, who was by birth a Gascon, of the families of Buc and Mirepoix, gave a magnificent tournament at Cambray, to which your noble father, God assoilize his soul! was, as well as five hundred knights, invited. Your father met with a tall, huge Gascon knight, who vaunted and boasted that he would and could conquer all and everything. Nothing, he swore, could stand before him, and vowed, God knows what else beside, and this he did before your father, who laughed in his face, and would have tweaked his beard for his insolent vaunting, but some knight present stayed him in his wrath; it was, however, agreed that they should run a tilt next day with each other; and notwithstanding your father, in three several encounters, lifted him out of his saddle as if he had been an infant, he must need appeal to swords, when he got so roughly handled, that he would have roared for mercy, but for very shame he durst not, seeing that it was before so large an assembly, and it was known what boastings he had made. So your noble father would not slay him outright; albeit he had so much the advantage, he could have done it with ease, but disarmed him and offered him his life—a grace which he very gladly and thankfully received. He, however, never recovered the shame of defeat, and his wounds defying the leech's skill, he died. His family swore they would be revenged upon your father; and he, gallant soul, laughed them to scorn. Howbeit, some wise and prudent people foreseeing that the worst might ensue to thy father, essayed to make a reconciliation, and so far succeeded, that the families agreed to cry quittance, if thy father would make a pilgrimage of penance to St. James of Compostella. Thy father, seeing the good people who had interested themselves in his behalf would be grieved did he not consent, agreed to the terms and went. Oh, that he did! oh, that sad, unfortunate journey!"

"It was during that pilgrimage he perished?" said Sir Walter, anxiously.

"It was—it was!" replied the old man. "At the time he set out, this town of La Rèole was being besieged by Earl Charles of Valois, brother to King Philip the Fair, who was endeavoring to wrest it from the King of England, the father of the present Edward. As thy father returned—I was in attendance upon him all the time—he paid the Earl Charles a visit; and one night, in returning from the Earl's hotel, where he had been passing the evening, he was waylaid by the kindred of him who had died, by those who had sworn to be at peace with thy father when he had performed the penance, and in spite of all resistance, was basely, cruelly murdered. I also was left for dead, covered with wounds, but I recovered—thy father never. The attack was so sudden that I could scarce distinguish who the assailants were, but I saw as I fell one man give thy father his death blow, by stabbing him in the back; the weapon reached his heart, and killed him. I saw the man's face, 'twas the last thing I saw until I afterwards returned to life. I never forgot it; he was a relation of the Gascon's; but when I told my story, he denied it strongly; and he being rich and powerful, was sooner credited than I, who was but a humble vassal. But I swore to be revenged upon him, and I was, to my soul's richest content."

"How?" inquired Sir Walter, with great interest.

"Why, Sir Walter," exclaimed the old man, excitedly, his voice rising with his enthusiasm, "I hovered about him; I watched him, dogged him, haunted him, incessantly; he knew it, he knew it—he saw me wherever he turned; he *felt* that I had sworn to have his life. He set his myrmidons to catch and slay me—offered a large sum for my head. I evaded all pursuit; and still was ever near him when he least expected it. He was harassed and affrighted, until he was wasted to a shadow—he could not rest nor sleep, for I appeared at all times and in all places. I was as a shadow, as a devilish spirit, that he could not shake off, and his life was a torment—as bad as any that can be inflicted in the infernal regions. At length I caught him alone: he shrieked to me for mercy; he had shewn my beloved master none, I gave him none—none, none. I buried my knife where he had struck my lord; I took care it reached his heart, for I repeated it again and again, and then left him a corpse. I then returned to La Rèole, and have lived ever since near the tomb of my beloved lord, in the hope that some day I should see his bones laid in the grave of his ancestors.

"And you shall have your wish, my faithful friend," exclaimed Sir Walter, affected by the old man's tale. "Where does his body now lay?"

"The Earl of Valois had him laid, immediately after his death, in a small chapel which then stood without the walls; but when the Earl conquered the town he caused the chapel to be enclosed as it now stands. I can lead you to it, and point out the tomb. Well I know it, for matins and vespers I pray by its side."

"Conduct me thither, at once," said the knight; "I am all impatience until I behold it."

"It is not far; follow me," replied the old man, and instantly led the way.

Sir Walter followed him rapidly, and after a short walk they came to the chapel and entered it, and the old man stopped before a small marble tomb, upon which the effigy of a knight, in all the panoply of war, rested; and, pointing to it, he turned to Sir Walter, and said—

"It is there!"

Sir Walter regarded the tomb for a few minutes in silence, and his bosom throbbed with strong emotions, and then he muttered—

"And my beloved, honored parent is there?"

"You may be perfectly assured that your father was buried and lies under this tomb, replied the old man, earnestly.

"I do not doubt thee," exclaimed Sir Walter. "There is something in my heart which tells me thou hast spoken the truth. My dear father," he apostrophised, "thy remains shall no longer lie here in obscurity, but be restored to the tomb of thy ancestors, so please God, ere another month hath passed away."

"Amen!" cried the old man, with a glad heart.

On looking closely at the tomb, the knight discovered an inscription in Latin, which, when deciphered, he found corroborated the old man's words. After a short time he retired and took the old man

to his quarters with him, and two days afterwards he had the tomb opened, and he found the body of his father in a good state of preservation. He had it carefully placed in a coffin, and sent it, under the charge of the old man, to Valenciennes, in the county of Hainault, where it was laid in the family tomb in the church of the Frères Mineurs, near to the choir. He gave large sums for masses to be said for the repose of his soul, and ordered them to be continued yearly, and the old man found a comfortable and happy asylum on his estate.

Very soon after this had occurred, the castle of La Rèole surrendered. The Earl then advanced against Monpouillant, which he captured. Castle Moron, Villefranche, Miraumont, Tonniens, Blayes, all surrendered to him, and then once more he returned to Bordeaux. In each of these conquests, Sir Walter had distinguished himself beyond precedent, and with the Earl of Derby, "gained so much riches," Froissart saith, "that it was marvellous to think on."

When the news reached the King of France of the conquests which had been made in Gascony, he dispatched the Duke of Normandy, with a very large army, to regain some of the places conquered. His numbers amounted to one hundred thousand men, and he attacked two places—Miraumont and Villefranche; which, with his enormous superiority of numbers, he easily conquered, and then attacked the castle and town of Angoulême, before which he lost a vast number of men, without making the smallest impression. In the mean time the Earl heard of their arrival, and sent a party of men to regain possession of Villefranche, and Sir Walter Manny, with the Earl of Pembroke, to defend the castle Aiguillon. Our gallant knight, as soon as he reached it, laid in a very large stock of every description of provision, particularly all such as would keep longest, and then strengthened the fortress walls and castle in every part, and when they had completed every preparation, they awaited patiently the attack.

Angoulême surrendered to the Duke of Normandy. Sir John Norwich, by a clever stratagem, saved himself and all his men, bag and baggage, and got safely to Aiguillon, and joined Sir Walter Manny. The Duke then quitted Angoulême, and advanced with his enormous army to carry Aiguillon, which stood on the banks of the Garonne, and had little doubt but with his hundred thousand men he should speedily make it his; for he guessed, and that correctly, that he was *one hundred to one* in point of numbers. He built a bridge to pass the Garonne, but when it was nearly finished, Sir Walter Manny, with a small number of companions, made a sally and destroyed it. Again it was erected, and again destroyed; day after day they continued, until such masses of infantry guarded the workmen that the bridge was completed, and the army passed over it; but though they fought all day they gained no point, still was Sir Walter Manny ever the victor. The army was divided into four divisions, attacking the castle at different points. For six days did they carry this mode of attack on without success; they then raised twelve battering engines, which hurled large stones, but these were destroyed before they could do much damage. Sir Walter was indefatigable, and the men, always cheered by his untiring gallantry, placed the greatest confidence in his judgment, and had every hope that they should yet defeat their enemies, tremendous as was the majority against them. Frequently would Sir Walter make excursions for forage, and return in sight of the army with his booty, without their being able to prevent him. A French noble, Lord Charles Montmorency, had also one day been out on a foraging expedition, and returning with a large number of cattle, he was encountered by Sir Walter Manny, whose numbers were as one to five; he, however, attacked the French instantly. The Earl of Pembroke hearing of the engagement, sallied from the walls to the aid of Sir Walter, and found him fighting desperately, unhorsed, but his banner still waving proudly, and he "enacting more wonders than a man." He was speedily rescued and remounted, and again he led on his followers, completely routing the party and making them fly in the greatest disorder, Lord Charles barely escaping with life.

Still passed day after day fighting, nothing but fighting; and still was the Duke of Normandy's army thinning without gaining one advantage. Four immensely tall towers were built and filled with men—were carried in vessels to the walls; but the "besieged let off four martinets," which completely upset and destroyed them, nearly drowning those who were in them. And now the Duke of Normandy was at his wit'send; and having sworn never to quit the place until he had conquered it, finding every scheme had failed, he was at a loss what to do, unless he reduced it by famine. It was his only alternative; and he sent to the King of France, relating his situation, and desiring to know if he wished him to remain so long before it, as he could not obtain it by force, for the English had vowed to eat their boots sooner than surrender.

Edward heard of Sir Walter Manny's situation, and raised a fine army with the purpose of coming to his aid, but circumstances induced him to change his mind; and instead of coming to Gascony, he landed in Normandy, and soon afterwards was fought the famous battle of Crecy, in which Edward's son, the Prince of Wales, then only sixteen, so greatly distinguished himself; as also did Sir John Chandos, of whom King Edward had taken great notice—his deeds of reckless daring and great prowess drawing him close to Edward's heart.

The French at this battle were defeated in the most disastrous manner, by less than a fourth of their number; and when King Philip returned to Paris, he immediately summoned the Duke of Normandy to him—his mandate was obeyed; the Duke raised the siege of Aiguillon, and departed with his whole army. No sooner did Sir Walter perceive that he was moving off, than he sallied forth with his men, and cut numbers of the French to pieces, besides capturing a large number of prisoners, thus preserving the castle against odds the most disproportionate, and proving himself the most brilliant man of his period.

Sir Walter soon heard of the glorious victory of Crecy, and hearing the King was at Calais, was anxious to see him. He sent for one of his prisoners, who was a Norman knight of high family and great wealth, and proffered him his liberty if he would get from the Duke of Normandy a passport for himself and twenty others, to ride through the country to Calais, without resting more than one night in any town. The knight agreed, and obtained the desired passport from the Duke, receiving in return from Sir Walter Manny a free release. Our gallant knight set forth, and performed half his journey safely, the passport being respected; but at Orleans he was arrested by a large body of soldiers, and in spite of his passport, was carried to Paris, and imprisoned in the prison of the Châtelet. To do the Duke of Normandy justice, he no sooner heard of this, than he went to the King of France, and remonstrated with him, but the King swore he would put him to death; he was too great an enemy, he said, to suffer him to escape;

he had foiled and defeated him everywhere—cost him blood and treasure; and now that he had him in his power, he would take his life.

The Duke vowed that if he did, he would never serve him more, nor should any of his people. That he would assist Edward in making France a desert; yet higher words passed, and the Duke quitted the presence, making oath that he would not serve or assist Philip while Sir Walter was in prison.

The King was advised ultimately to forego his intention—to liberate Sir Walter, and load him with gifts, which Sir Walter was very loth to receive—indeed, would only accept them on condition, that if Edward did not approve of the act, to return them all; and he resolved that Edward should not suffer him to keep them. He bade the King farewell, and journied to Calais, where Edward received him like a brother.

Sir Walter related to him the incidents which occurred during his progress to Calais, and made him acquainted with his imprisonment, his subsequent release, and receipt of the gifts, coining his account in such words as he knew would fire Edward's impetuous nature; and before he had come to the finish of his recital, the King interrupted him, by saying—

"By the Holy Trinity! Sir Walter, this king of France has sorely misused you, and now seeks to repair his forfeited honor by endowing you with gifts which are valueless to you, as tokens of esteem: because the presents of one who is devoid of principle, of faith, of all that is noble, are unworthy of the acceptance of a knight of high renown and great honor—such an one as thyself, my good Sir Walter. Keep them not, my trusty friend; restore his vile baubles, and teach him thou hadst rather receive the simplest offering of one who is estimable, however humble his station, than the gorgeous jewels of the faithless, treacherous King of France, puissant as he believes himself."

"It gives me great pleasure, your Majesty," replied Sir Walter, "that I can obey your wish with the sincerest satisfaction. I received the gifts with reluctance, and I return them with entire content; I felt degraded in accepting them, and feel agreeably relieved in restoring them to the donor, of whom I hold an opinion which is not more flattering to him than your Majesty's."

"By my faith, Sir Walter," replied the King, laughing, "but thou hast shown his liege subjects many good proofs of the estimation in which thou dost hold him and his followers. By my halidame! upon consideration, he owes thee no good-will; thou hast destroyed his castles, his lands, his soldiers; thou hast cost him much blood and treasure, and robbed him of honor in marvellous quantities, and I wonder not that it went sore against his will, when he had thee in his clutches, to let thee loose again to do him still further injury. By the Mass! it must have been a sore struggle. However, send back King Philip his presents; our own treasury is low and scanty, most unroyally furnished, we confess; but we have still enough, thank God, for ourselves and for you, Sir Walter—and whatever there is in our coffers is at your service, if it be only for the trusty and right gallant manner in which thou hast served us."

Sir Walter returned his acknowledgments for the King's condescension, and soon after quitting his presence, he went to a cousin, the Lord of Mansac, and placing the jewels in his hands, he bade him ride to Paris and return them to King Philip, saying that he desired to be commended to him, thanked him for his gifts, but that it was not agreeable to the King of England that he should retain them. His cousin took the jewels and went immediately to Paris, where he had an interview with Philip, and delivered his message. The King was considerably mortified, and was not much at a loss to guess why they were returned. He, however, said nothing further than that he regretted Sir Walter was not permitted to keep them, and begged the Lord of Mansac to keep them himself, which royal gift he had no inclination to refuse.

Edward remained a long while before Calais, which was so well fortified that he could only hope to conquer it by famine; and with that intent he guarded every pass or road, so that no provision could go in, or inhabitant quit the place. But Philip learned by some means to what straits the townspeople were reduced, gathered a large army together, and marched to raise the siege. Edward got news of this, and instantly posted his army in such a position that he could effectually prevent the town being relieved. Philip then, in the hope of drawing him from his position, invited him to do battle, but Edward was not to be deceived, and returned for answer, that he "was not in the smallest degree inclined to comply with his request, or to gratify his convenience, or to abandon what he had gained." The message was conveyed to Philip, and he devised schemes of all natures, to draw the English out, but in vain; and at last, as fighting was not his hobby, he decamped to Amiens, and there disbanded his troops, but not before Sir Walter Manny, with a troop of his people, fell on their rear—captured horses and waggons, laden with wine and provisions, and a number of rich prisoners as well, from whom a rich ransom could be obtained.

When the unfortunate Calesians knew of King Philip's departure, they were in despair, and the governor made a signal from the walls for a parley, to conduct which the King sent Sir Walter Manny and the Lord Basset. The governor then proposed to deliver up the town and all it contained, upon the condition that he and the whole of the inhabitants were suffered freely to depart without molestation. Sir Walter told him in reply, that Edward was so enraged at the protracted siege, and the loss it had been to him of time and wealth, that nothing would satisfy him but an unconditional surrender, leaving him to discriminate whom he should suffer to ransom themselves, and whom he should put to death; to which the governor gallantly returned, that they would all prefer suffering death, than that "the smallest boy in the town should suffer more than the best."

After a little further colloquy, Sir Walter admiring the governor's bravery, he returned to the King, proposing the terms, to which Edward would not listen at first, until Sir Walter Manny pleaded so strongly, hinting at the same time, that if the boon was not granted, Edward would lose his services. The King was induced to listen, but would consent only on condition that six of the principal citizens would march out of the town bare-footed and bare-headed, with ropes round their necks, and the keys of the town in their hands, and these six men to be at his absolute disposal.

With these terms Sir Walter returned to the governor, Sir John de Vienne; he was very loth to deliver them, for his generous nature prompted an entire pardon; he could well appreciate the valour of those who held out to the last, for in the defence of any place of importance he would have died rather than surrender it; and he communicated with some hesitation the King's mandate: the governor received it mournfully, and begging Sir Walter to remain for a

short time, while he made it known to the people, he hastened to the market-place, and causing the town bell to be rung to assemble the people, he unfolded the conditions Edward had proffered them.

The intelligence was received with considerable grief and lamentations, because it was not for a moment doubted that the doom of those who were to be delivered up in this degrading manner was sealed; the women wept and sobbed, for each scarce knew but that they might lose a husband, or a father, and the men reduced by famine and incessant toil to a weakness which levelled all power of mind, were as deeply affected, for they knew not of one who would thus devote his life for the general safety; such was the scene of desolation, of misery, and despair, that even the bold soldier De Vienne wept like a child.

When the clamour was in some degree lessened, the wealthiest citizens in the town, Eustace de St. Pierre, stepped forward, and saying that it would be very dreadful for so many persons to die of famine, when they might be saved by the voluntary death of a few; and believing such rendering up a life would be acceptable to the Almighty, inasmuch as it would save much misery, he named himself as the first of the six. It would have made the stoniest heart bleed to have seen the people fall at his feet, with tears and groans, pouring out their thanks and grief at the same time for his noble devotion, and for his irreparable loss. His example was speedily followed by one nearly as rich as himself, named John Daire, then two brothers named Wisant, and ultimately two more, as wealthy as their companions, completing the number required. Then Sir John de Vienne led them to where he had left Sir Walter Manny standing, followed by the townspeople, who, displayed by their weeping, their sighs, their mournful lamentations, how bitterly they felt the loss they were about to sustain. Sir John delivered them to Sir Walter Manny, and after assuring him that they were the wealthiest persons in the town, begged of him to implore the King not to take their lives.

Sir Walter shook his head sorrowfully, and replied—

"The King's will is indisputable. I know not what he may purpose doing with these generous men, but of this be assured—if I have any influence with him, it shall all be exerted to save those who would perish for the sake of their fellow citizens."

His gentle reply was received with much satisfaction, and raised in the bosoms of all hopes that his interference would prove successful. He led them to Edward's camp, and the King was seated there upon his throne, with the Queen by his side, and was surrounded by a large assemblage of nobles and knights. The merchants fell upon their knees before Edward, and delivered up the keys of the town and castle, and gave themselves up to his will and pleasure, in order that the people of Calais might be spared. It was a sad sight, and there were few there who looked on unmoved, unless it was Edward himself; and it is doubtful whether he really intended to sacrifice their lives, albeit he was much enraged with them for the long and determined resistance they had made to him. He, however, regarded them with stern and angry looks, and receiving the keys, ordered them to to be immediately removed to have their heads stricken off. Sir Walter at once stepped forward—

"Your Majesty's name and fame," he said, "are high in the mouths of the noblest-souled men in the world—your renown for honor is as great as for courage and prowess. You are looked up to by the bravest knights, by the preux chevalier, the simple squire, and the humble soldier, as the soul of spotless honor! You will not tarnish its brilliancy by putting these citizens to death, who of their own free will have surrendered themselves to you, in order to save their fellow townsmen!"

"Their fate is sealed!" said the King, coldly.

"Ay!" replied Sir Walter, warmly; "but upon the side of charity and mercy."

"The headsman must do his duty," said the King.

"Your Majesty will not persist in putting men to death for deeds that at another time you would laud highly," cried Sir Walter, earnestly. "Had these men held out for you, instead of against you, until the last extremity, and behaved thus nobly, in sacrificing themselves to save your liege subjects, you would have been the loudest in their praise, the first to have extolled their deeds; and if they had fallen you would have revenged their death with an army, and have raised monuments to their memory. What is good in the service of one prince, must be equally so in that of another; the law of honor admits of no distinction; a man may be a good servant, a preux knight, a noble spirit, although he serve your enemy, and is not the less to be considered so, because he fights not under your banner. These men have been good servants and noble spirits; it would ill become your greatness to dim the lustre of your honor by taking their lives."

"They must die!" said the King.

"True!" answered Sir Walter: but not now, and by your hand. Your clemency is known in all countries where you have been and conquered. You will not, at one blow, sweep all the fame for this virtue which you have obtained, and make yourself remembered for your cruelty."

"Howsoe'er I be remembered in men's minds," the King answered; "these men shall not escape the headsman; let him at once be summoned; I will myself see their heads taken off."

"Your Majesty will also see yourself one servant the less," returned the knight: "Walter Manny would disdain to draw his bright sword in behalf of the prince, who, to his courage and abilities as a warrior, did not add justice and mercy. Should your Majesty carry out your fell intention, I resign my offices, my knighthood, and shall blush that I ever made the mistake of being so devoted to you whose honor I deemed so high and proud; I would have hewn the man down, though he were a giant, who had dared to breathe a doubt upon it."

"You speak boldly, Sir Walter Manny," said the King, regarding him with a steadfast gaze, which the knight returned unflinchingly.

"And feel warmly!" replied Sir Walter. "I am quite prepared to fulfil my promise."

"I cannot accept your resignation. I have further need of your sword," said the King, imperatively.

"My sword you may have, but not the hand that wields it," returned the knight, firmly. "You may order me to the block—I can accompany these good men there, but you cannot make me strike another blow in your behalf."

"Oh, my good lord!" exclaimed the Queen, suddenly bursting into tears, and though far gone in pregnancy, throwing herself upon her knees before Edward, "harden not your heart against these worthy men; do not cast from your soul all mercy; do not throw from your heart and service one so high, so noble, so gentle, so faithful, as the good knight, Sir Walter: incur not a loss you can never, never supply. Turn not your head from me, Edward, nor let your ear be deaf to my prayer. These men must not die, Edward—they have done their duty to their sovereign honorably and nobly; they are worthy of praise and honor rather than death: it would be unkingly,

ungenerous, unjust, unlike Edward of England, to destroy them thus. They have wives and children, who must feel as I and thy son would feel, were you to be taken from us. It is not in your nature, Edward, thus wantonly to inflict agony where you might confer delight and happiness. Edward! hear me. I have come to you through toil and peril, and since I have been with you, I have not asked of you one gift, and now, for the sake of the son of the blessed Mary! and for your love of me, I do most humbly ask you to be merciful to these six men."

Edward, who had regarded her with great earnestness while she was pleading, and when she ceased he raised her up and said, smilingly—

"With two such powerful pleaders what am I to do?"

"Be merciful," replied the Queen, clasping her hands imploringly and anxiously.

"These merchants may thank thy presence for their safety," said the King: "had you been anywhere else I would not have answered for their lives. However, you have entreated so earnestly and so well, that I cannot refuse. Take them, they are yours to do as you list with."

"Ten thousand thanks for your gracious boon," said the Queen, and rising up, she led the citizens to her apartments, to give them refreshments, and see that they were escorted back, in safety to the town. When they had left the King's presence, he turned to Sir Walter Manny, who, with a grave countenance, stood gazing upon the earth, and said—

"Still the same, Sir Walter Manny; upon all points on which I try you, you ever prove the noblest in heart and soul, as you are daring in the fiercest battle. Give me thy hand, Sir Walter; let me show thee by the warm pressure of mine, that I look upon thee as a brother, that I am proud thou hast so much friendship for me as to speak thy real thoughts, and show thy anxiety for my honor."

Sir Walter gave his hand, evidently with great satisfaction, and the King pressed it with considerable enthusiasm.

"By my Halidame! Sir Walter," added he, "I would sooner part with the best half of my kingdom than lose thee."

Sir Walter bowed low, and exclaimed—

"And I, your Majesty, could find it easier to perish, either on the field or the block, than part with your Majesty's favor and grace."

The King acknowledged the sentiment conveyed in the fervent words by another warm pressure of the hand, and then placing the keys of the town and the castle in his care, he sent him, accompanied by the Earls of Warwick and Stafford, to take possession of the town of Calais.

In Calais they remained some time; the King presenting Sir Walter with several handsome buildings there, and then they returned to England, leaving Sir Aymery de Pavie, a native of Lombardy, whom Edward had reared from a youth, governor of the castle. Some time afterwards it reached the King's ears that Sir Aymery had been tampered with by Sir Geoffrey de Chargny, a French knight, who had command of the French stationed at St. Omer, and, for twenty thousand crowns, had agreed to deliver over the town to him. Edward was bitterly mortified on hearing this news, but displayed not his chagrin, nor made any stir about the matter. He sent privately for Sir Aymery, who never dreamed that Edward was acquainted with his faithlessness, and when he reached the presence of the King, Edward took him aside, and at once challenged him with his treachery. He was so taken by surprise, that he fell on his knees, and confessed, imploring mercy, which Edward promised to grant him if he would continue the treaty with Sir Geoffrey, and inform him of the day upon which it was agreed to deliver up the town.

The Lombard, glad to purchase his life and pardon on any terms, readily consented, and it was finally arranged, on his return to Calais, that he should admit the French upon the last night of the year. He made Edward acquainted with the time, and the King collected three hundred men-at-arms, and six hundred archers, and arrived at Calais so secretly that his presence was unknown but to a few. Sir Walter Manny was with him, as well as his own gallant son, and a number of famed nobles and knights. He did not wish the French to know he was there in person, and made Sir Walter Manny undertake the leading and management of the enterprise, intending, with his son, to fight under his banner.

The French, under Geoffrey de Chargny, arrived at Calais at the time appointed, and every preparation was made to receive them. Sir Aymery was paid his twenty thousand crowns by Sir Odoart de Renty, who, with a hundred men-at-arms, had been sent forward by Sir Geoffrey to take possession. They were led to a tower which contained the King, his son, and a number of men-at-arms, who, rushing out upon the Frenchmen, speedily over-mastered them and made them prisoners; they were then shut up in the tower, and the English prepared to attack the remainder, who were waiting, shivering with cold, to be summoned to enter the town, and speculating upon the cause of the delay. They were soon wakened out of their dreams by the arrival of the English, who, shouting "A Manny! A Manny! to the rescue!" set fiercely upon them. The fight was desperate; the Frenchmen, principally composed of the flower of their army, doing their utmost to gain a victory by the sword if they could not by stratagem. The King fought gallantly, and got opposed to a tall stalwart knight, one Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont, who twice beat him upon his knees, but the King ultimately overpowered him, and received his sword in token of submission. The French were beaten, and surrendered themselves prisoners; the next evening, the first of the new year, the King entertained all his knights and prisoners to a supper in the castle, and presented a chaplet of pearls to Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont for his great gallantry, and gave him his liberty free of ransom at the same time. He praised his people much for their gallantry, and treated his prisoners right courteously, and acknowledged publicly his great obligations to Sir Walter Manny, whose valour and tact had once more enabled him to add another victory to his numerous conquests.

After seeing that Calais was rendered safe from any future treachery, he returned to England, accompanied by Sir Walter Manny, who now scarce ever quitted his side; he made him a baron and a privy councillor, and in all things looked to him for advice and assistance, which Sir Walter gave with the sound sense and pure honor which had always characterised him. While sojourning in London, at the court, it happened that he was thrown much into the society of one of the maids of honor, the beautiful daughter of an English noble, and in this instance did he show that singular generosity that adorned him through his life. He discovered that she loved him, that it was a first and passionate love, for she was young, and had seen none hitherto upon whom her heart had settled. In the course of what appeared a casual conversation, she discovered that he had loved, but not being fortunate in obtaining the chosen one of his soul, he had resolved never to wed. It was a blow to her that

nearly cost her her life: she drooped day by day, pining and wasting away—

> She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek; she pined in thought,

and her friends beheld her upon the verge of death, without ascertaining the cause of her malady. All remedies were tried and failed; the physican hit upon the thought that love might be the cause, mentioned it to her friends, and obtained from them the names of all whom they thought it likely she might have set her heart upon, but Sir Walter Manny's name was not of the number. The physician held her feeble pulse, and spoke of the youths whose names he had in his possession, but found that none of them added one beat to the slow pulsation. While yet engaged in his task, a message was brought from Sir Walter, containing an inquiry respecting her health, and the physician instantly felt the pulse increase to a frightful rapidity; the answer was returned, the messenger departed, and the pulse returned to its original vibration. The physician was struck by this change, but it might have been occasioned only by the sudden entry of the messenger. He resolved to try whether this was the case—he commenced talking of Sir Walter, and found that his discourse produced what it had failed in before; the beats of her pulse were tenfold while conversing of the knight to what they were at any other time. He made several experiments, and found his surmises strengthened; he challenged her with his discovery, gently and kindly. She denied it strongly at first; but, upon being pressed, burst into a flood of tears and confessed it, but charged him most earnestly not to betray her confidence. He begged of her to compose herself, and promised to do nothing that could in any way compromise her honor.

He visited Sir Walter Manny, and in speaking of her, told him she must die; there was no help—no hope for her but one, and if she was disappointed in that she must perish. Sir Walter, after a little hesitation, but not having the most distant idea of the truth, inquired what it could be; he received for answer, it was love—love for one whom she despaired of ever having. As her rank and wealth were such as to command the hand of any one, even a prince, Sir Walter, in some surprise, asked who it could be?

"Yourself!" laconically, but emphatically exclaimed the physician.

"I?" reiterated Sir Walter, recoiling several steps.

"Even you, Sir Walter," replied the physician; "and if you refuse her your hand, she dies, as surely as we are conferring together."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the knight.

"True, nevertheless," was the physician's reply. "Her frame has reached the utmost stretch of tenuity, and is incapable of itself to return to its original vigor; the mind has produced the feebleness of the body, and the mind alone can work the cure. If she weds not with thee, I will not answer for her life even a few short days."

"This intelligence is the most extraordinary," exclaimed Sir Walter, as if bewildered. "I had no idea whatever that her thoughts were directed to me. I never even asked myself whether she was in love at all, least of all with me, nor saw I ever any indication on her part that it was so."

"That is very possible," returned the physician; it is her struggles with the passion, in order to conceal it, that have brought her to this extremity."

"Are you sure you are correct in your surmises?" asked Sir Walter, anxiously.

"They are no longer surmises," replied he. "I, with much difficulty and many promises not to reveal it, extorted it from her, and she confessed that love for you had thus reduced her. She is very young, she is very beautiful; it is a pity that one so youthful and fair should sink into the grave thus early with a broken heart. It is sad, very sad!"

"What is to be done?" asked the knight, in intense anxiety.

"One thing alone—you must wed her!" replied the physician.

"It is impossible!" cried the knight.

"Then must she perish!" he answered; "her life is in your hands—it rests with you whether you shall stretch forth your hand, as our Saviour did to Jairus' daughter, and bid her arise, or leave her to die."

Sir Walter walked to and fro in great agitation. He had set up Violet in his heart as an idol to worship, which no other form was to supersede, or even to share in the silent, but devoted homage; and here he was called upon to put it aside, and raise up another of whom he had never thought, to whom his heart had never been drawn, save in mere admiration of her beauty and amiable disposition, which, however, made no further impression upon his memory. It was asking more than he thought it possible he could grant—particularly after he had for so long a period borne his resolve never to marry unmoved. As he walked with hurried step backwards and forwards, the physician calmly awaited his reply, regarding this agitation and excitement with the most perfect professional coolness. At length Sir Walter stopped short, and said—

"I will consider of this."

"As you please, Sir Walter," replied the physician; "but I must have your answer before I leave you."

"Before you leave?" iterated the knight.

"Exactly; the maiden is so reduced that any delay will be fatal—a tardy consent will be of no avail," he exclaimed. "I must bear back with me her reprieve or death-warrant."

"Knows she that you have come to me with that purpose?" asked Sir Walter, eagerly.

"She knows not that I have come to you at all," he returned. "She lies languidly on her couch without hope—mark me, Sir Walter, without hope! and the most despairing wretch in the world cannot know an agony more bitter. It is true she bears her fate gently and placidly, that none may see the worm that is eating its deadly way into her heart, and looks forward to the time when she shall be placed in the narrow marble house that contains the dust of her ancestors, with a resignation which is, in itself, a painful struggle, for she cannot feel truly resigned when her young thoughts, her fresh imaginings, are all with you and the world; but still it bears no outward show of fretting or complaining. Now, Sir Walter, there is yet a possibility of saving her; your consent will restore her to life—your denial place her in the grave. I dare not seek to know whether you have engagements which may preclude you from wedding her, because you may show me how you have justly a right to refuse, and I should be grieved to hear it. I wish not to see a flower like her thus destroyed, and would rather you did a little injustice for a great good, than be strictly just and sacrifice the life of this young girl. Still, Sir Walter, it would be unfair in me were I to withhold from you that what is passing now between you and I is a secret, and will, as far as I am concerned, remain so. None know but yourself the purport of my visit to you; and none but you and I know the cause of the maiden's malady,

nor ever will, unless you yourself reveal it. If you refuse to wed with her the world will never know that you were wished to do it; your own heart and conscience alone will tell you whether the necessity was so stern as to forbid you regenerating one whose whole soul is thine. I have done, Sir Walter, and await your reply."

"There are many strong causes to induce me to refuse your request," said Sir Walter, after a short and painful struggle, during which the physician eyed him closely; "but her life is paramount to all. There is my hand—I will wed her, so use my assent in any way that you may think best calculated to restore her. Let me see you again soon, to know the result of your remedy, but leave me now. Say what you please, act as you think proper, but leave me."

"Sir Walter Manny," exclaimed the physician, with strong feeling, the water standing in his eyes, "men have called you noble, the bravest, brightest flower that ever graced the field of knighthood; your actions in the turmoil of war have proved ye such, and this act has proved to me that in private you are no less high and noble in your thoughts and deeds than in the battle field. The grace of the Holy Mother and her blessed son be ever upon ye!"

"I thank ye for your good opinion," cried Sir Walter, hastily, "but I do no more than I esteem my duty. Return to the maiden as speedily as may be, and cheer her with your best ability: if you rob her of even a short hour's sadness, it is a year of life gained."

"I will leave you at once," replied the physician, "but ere I go, have I your permission to say that you stand well affected towards her, without being aware that her love for you hath stretched her on a couch, which would have been one of death but for your clemency?"

"Most assuredly I would not have her think I wed her only to save her life. I am much mistaken in her nature if she would not decidedly refuse to accept my hand, if she knew such to be the case. No, good leech, say all that thou thinkest needful to soothe and comfort her, and speedily restore her; I will so conduct myself that she shall not know but the offer of my hand and heart emanated from myself alone."

"You are a marvel among men, Sir Walter," exclaimed the physician, elevating his hands in wonder; "your generosity—"

"Pardon me, I would be alone," exclaimed the knight, gently, and using a few courteous words, he rung a small bell: a servant appeared, who conducted the physician from the apartment, bowing, and affected by the scene in which he had just been an actor.

He lost no time in returning to the maiden, and found her still declining, weaker than the preceding day, and so low, that without the extremest care, he perceived that his intelligence, unless most carefully administered, would destroy where it was intended to save; and he began to lead the conversation, as if casually, to Sir Walter, and referring slightly to her confession, he asked her if she was sure Sir Walter knew not of her love. She replied in the affirmative.

"Does he love another?" he inquired.

"He has!" she replied, feebly; the maiden is lost to him, and I believe he will never love or wed another."

"He paid you more attention than any maiden at court," he observed; "why should not you have made an impression upon his heart?"

"Impossible!" she replied; "he is so superior in all things, so high in thought, so elevated in his aspirations and enthusiasm, that he could never think of one so humble as me."

"You are mistaken," replied the physician, emphatically.

"What mean you?" she cried, the blood rushing to her brow, and her heart beating so violently as almost to be audible. The physician saw that she would not be strong enough to bear the disclosure, so merely said—

"I mean you may be mistaken. Sir Walter, although high in honor and principle, possessing great and lofty enthusiasm, has still so much consideration for his fellow beings as never to conceive himself removed out of the pale of their communion. He is known to maintain the honor of maidens against all comers, and is, therefore, well disposed towards them, and I see not why you should not make an impression upon his heart, for you are young and lovely, and possess every attribute to excite the love of the noblest."

The maiden shook her head with a faint smile, and answered—

"But not that of Sir Walter Manny."

"Why not, Sir Walter?" inquired he.

"Ah!" she replied, "there is none worthy of him—none—none! A princess might despair to win his heart—what then should I?"

"You have no greater need to despair than a princess. Sir Walter is one who would wed the maiden of his heart were she a peasant," replied the physician, who knew if he could only produce *hope*, his task would speedily and easily be accomplished. "I attended a servant-man pertaining to his household this morning, and but that you might deem me too bold, I would repeat some matter he related to me concerning the knight, which I fancy affects you."

"Pray let me hear it," cried she, eagerly.

"I fear your strength is not equal to it," he said, hesitatingly.

"Indeed, indeed it is: I will hear it very calmly—I will not be agitated—I will be very, very quiet if you will tell me."

"Well, upon that condition, I will."

"A thousand thanks!" she exclaimed, earnestly.

"I inquired of this man concerning Sir Walter's health, and he replied that he was well in health, but his spirits were affected—they were dull and low. I inquired the cause, and the man laughingly said, he believed a fair maiden was the cause—Ah, you promised me to be quiet and calm; you are not, your face is now pale, now red."

"Heed me not—proceed! proceed!" she cried, eagerly, clasping her hands imploringly to him. "I will be very calm."

"I inquired if he knew the maiden? he said he could not say with any certainty, but he guessed. I asked him who, and he replied that he had been sent regularly to inquire after the health of a maiden who was laid on a sick couch, and his answer was waited for by Sir Walter with great anxiety, and when it was unfavourable, he seemed plunged into the profoundest melancholy. I made further inquiries, which have induced me to believe that Sir Walter stands more affected towards you than you believe; and were you only well enough to receive him, I think you would find I have not surmised wrongfully."

"Oh, Holy Virgin! if this should be so!" exclaimed the maiden, earnestly.

"I am so convinced that it is, I would stake my reputation, nay, my life upon it," he returned. "I cannot say that it is so, but I believe it to be so."

"Oh, good leech, can you not restore me my health?" she ejaculated, very anxiously.

"It depends much upon yourself and the will of God," replied he. "I will use my utmost skill, but you must obey whatever I prescribe implicitly."

"I will—I will," she answered.

"Then I doubt not we may yet see you in good health again," he said, "and right glad shall I be to witness it; for independent of the regret I shoul feel to see you pass away thus early, I should grieve to see Sir Walter bowed down with affliction at thy loss."

"Oh, if he but thinks of me—if he could but find one corner of his heart to bestow upon me, I should be so very happy," she ejaculated.

The physician assured her that he fancied she already had a great portion of it, and for a short time continued the conversation, until he had raised strong hope in her, and that once firmly planted, there was little necessity for medicine. It was the medicine "for the mind diseased," and such was the power of it that in a week she was so far recovered as to quit her chamber. She had a motive now to live, and her desire to get well was responded to by her bodily faculties, for the mind has so strong a sympathy with the system, one invariably suffers by the other's weakness, or is invigorated by its strength. It was managed, as she grew better, to strengthen the hopes which had lifted her from the verge of the tomb, and when restored to health, Sir Walter kept his promise; he realised her hopes, for he made her his wife, and so acted to her, that she knew not but the choice of his heart had fallen upon her, and without any consideration but affection for her he had made her his bride. The wedding was very splendid, the King attending it with the whole court, and the rejoicings and festivities were upon a most magnificent scale.

Previous to his marriage, Sir Walter sent for Wat Tyler, and to him he related the whole affair, and at the same time restored him the banner which Violet had made and embroidered for him.

"It has been my Oriflamme, no deed has ever sullied it," he exclaimed with fervency; beneath it I have performed my proudest achievements; it was the shrine of my devotion. Fate has ordered that I shall no longer bear it with the singleness of heart and freedom of thought and position I have hitherto held, and I will never raise it to bear beneath it a divided feeling. If I may not regard it as I have of old, I will never wrong it by waving it over me thus changed. Return it to Violet; tell her I shall never behold her more, but her image, as that of a bright deity, shall still be in my heart until I have no thought nor life."

Wat received it with emotion, and declining to stay and witness the ceremony, returned to Brenchley, conveying with the banner several magnificent presents from Sir Walter to his child, and the warmest protestations of continued friendship. Sir Walter remained in London, attending upon Edward, and found a tender and affectionate companion in his bride. If he did not return her love with an equal feeling, he was still so kind and attentive that she discovered not that she was not sole mistress of his heart as of his hand.

During the time, Sir John Chandos, who made the camp his home, the battle field his constant scene of action, had, by his gallantry, made himself high in favour with Edward, the Prince of Wales, surnamed the Black Prince, and was his leading counsellor during his invasion of France. What Sir Walter Manny had been to Edward, the king, Sir John Chandos was to Edward, the prince. In several contests previous to the famous battle of Poitiers, Sir John Chandos so distinguished himself by his wisdom, as well as his extraordinary bravery and prowess, that the Black Prince had him ever at his side, and followed his advice almost implicitly. His name soon rose as high as Sir Walter Manny's, for his utter recklessness of life, his tremendous efforts in the most desperate scenes, were not, nor could be surpassed by those of any man. After several great victories, the army, which he might almost have been said to have led, arrived at Poitiers, and learned that the French King, John, who had recently succeeded to the throne on the death of his father Philip, was advancing to attack them with immense numbers, and the disparity may be better understood when it is stated that the English were two thousand men-at-arms, four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred footmen, while the French army was divided into three battalions, each consisting of sixteen thousand men-at-arms "of tried courage," without numbering archers or cross-bowmen. Each side was acquainted with the amount of the other's forces, and the French made sure that nothing could prevent them winning the battle; but, as in the famous battle of Crecy, they were wofully mistaken. While drawn up for battle, the Cardinal de Perigord went between the two armies striving to make peace, but did not succeed. While he was making the negotiations, Sir John Chandos, who was averse to anything but a battle, was riding along the line to examine his men. He reached so closely to the skirts of the French army, that he observed a French noble, the Lord de Clermont, very near to him, but he was retiring without taking notice of him, when the Frenchman called out, contemptuously—

"How long is it since you have taken to wear my arms?"

Sir John Chandos looked upon him instantly, and perceived to his surprise that, by a singular coincidence, they had embroidered upon their surcoats the same device. John Chandos, after the burial of Rubacelle, had her figure emblazoned in blue, surrounded by sunbeams, upon his breast, as a token of his devotion to her. Spectators deemed it a Madonna; he let them believe so; but he knew that it was an emblem of her who had departed—who had been to him more desirable than honor, glory, or life. The French lord had a Madonna, in blue, in the centre of sunbeams upon his surcoat, and thus he had occasion given him to speak in the strain he had. John Chandos looked at him for a moment in silence, and then replied—

"Thou hast mine no less than I have thine; the device is mine, and I presume I have equally a right to wear it with you, without being called in question of any one, least of all by you."

"'Tis false," replied the lord, hectoring, "and were it not for the truce I would speedily convince thee thou hast no right to don it."

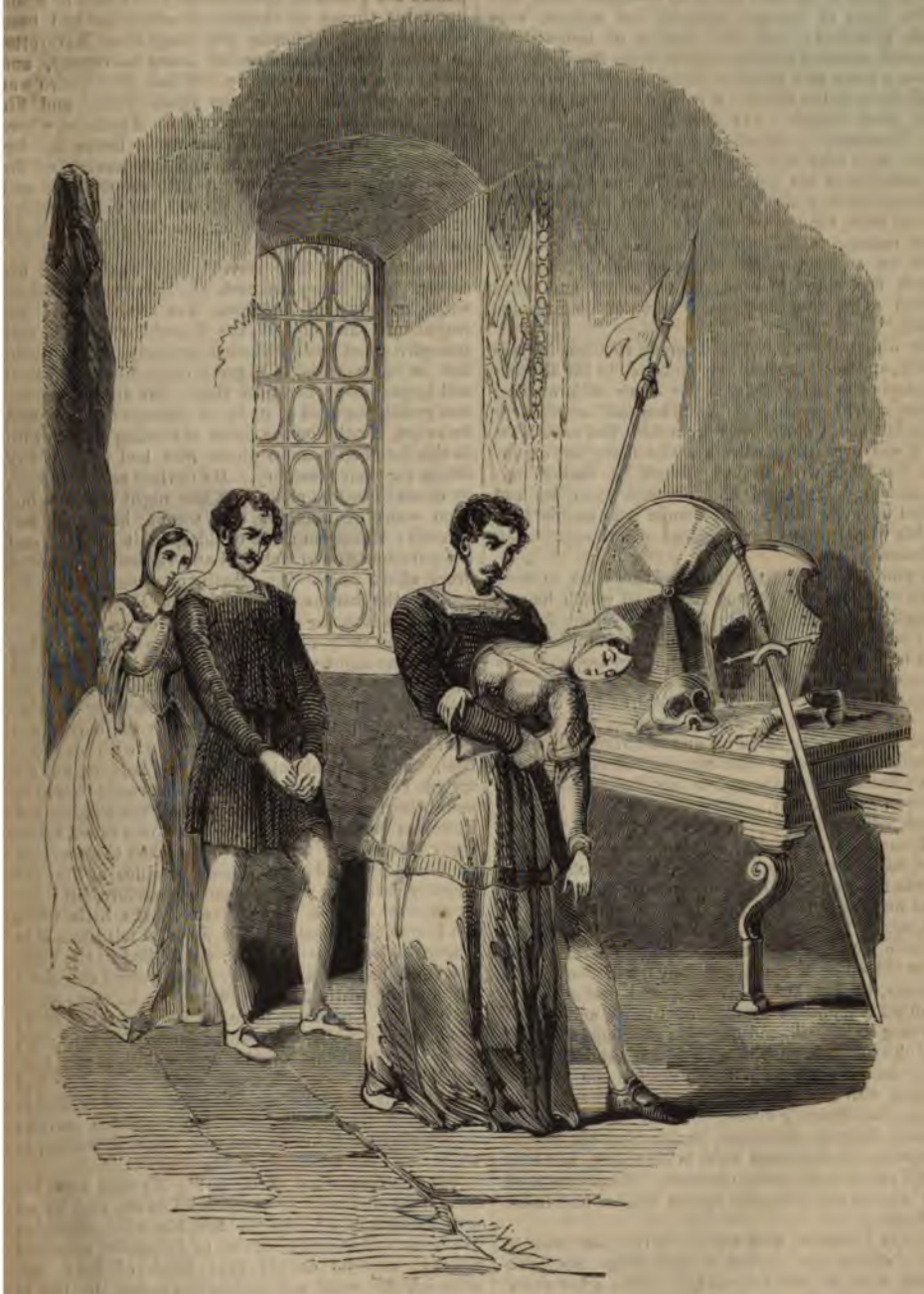
"We shall meet in the field to-morrow," answered Sir John Chandos, with cool contempt, "and will decide whether thou or I shall wear it in future."

"That is the way you English boast," he retorted; "and you take whatever you see good or handsome on others, but invent nothing for yourself."

"Bah!" returned Sir John, and rode slowly away.

The next morning the battle was fought, and one of the first slain was my Lord of Clermont, who was mowed down by Sir John as though he had been a reed. The issue of the fight is well known: the English, with their handful of men, were victorious, and the King of France himself was taken prisoner. At the most critical part of the battle, Sir John Chandos urged the Prince to push forward on a certaint point, and the day would be his own.

"John, get forward!" replied the Prince; you shall not see me turn my back this day, but I will always be among the foremost."



And so he was: he kept close to Sir John Chandos, and the gallant knight led him into the fiercest and hottest of the fray. The slaughter was tremendous, and the victory one of the most complete ever gained; all the flower of the French knighthood were slain. The French King and his son, seventeen earls, and a long train of barons, knights, and squires, were taken prisoners; and the number of men-at-arms captured exceeded alone the *whole of the English army*. It was a great and glorious victory, and one which, in addition to the renown it gave the victors, brought them great wealth. "It may be easily supposed," says Froissart, "that all those who accompanied the Prince were very rich in glory and wealth, as well by the ransoms of his prisoners, as by the quantities of gold and silver plate, rich jewels, and trunks stuffed full of belts, that were weighty from their gold, and silver ornaments, and furred mantles. They set no value on armour, tents, or other things; for the French had come there as magnificently and richly dressed as if they had been sure of gaining the victory."

Sir John Chandos gained great renown in this victory, and was more than ever endeared to the Prince; frequently the latter charged Sir John with wearing a grave and melancholy aspect when not engaged in strife, but could never draw from him the reason for it; it was ever the same: a smile never set on his brow but when with flashing sword he dashed into the midst of desperate conflict, and then his eye lighted up with enthusiasm, a smile was on his face, and his words were like the sound of a trumpet upon the heart.

It would far exceed the limits of this work to even briefly relate all the gallant actions in which he was engaged subsequent to this; it can, therefore, only be said that he accompanied the Black Prince to England, when he brought hither the King of France, and was welcomed and honored with the distinction his great services merited. King Edward entered into a treaty with the French King, which, however, the French would not ratify or agree to, and Edward, gathering a splendid army, once more entered France; and Sir John Chandos, accompanied by Sir Walter, now Lord Manny, was with him. After some fighting, of little import, articles of peace were again drawn up between the French and English, highly advantageous to the latter, and returned to England; and Sir John Chandos was rewarded by Edward with the high post of regent and lieutenant of the whole province of Aquitaine, which in the treaty had been ceded to England, "to take possession of all the lands aforesaid, and receive the faith, fidelity, and homage of the counts, viscounts, barons, knights, towns, and castles." He instituted everywhere seneschals, bailiffs, and officers according to his will, and fixed his residence at Niort. Sir John kept a noble and great establishment, and he had the means of doing it; for the King of England, who loved him much, wished it should be so. He was certainly worthy of it, for he was a sweet-tempered knight—courteous, benign, amiable, liberal, courageous, prudent, and loyal in all affairs, and bore himself valiantly on every occasion. There was none more beloved and esteemed by the knights and ladies of his time."

So says Froissart, who was about three-and-twenty years of age at this period, and, therefore, well able to speak from his own knowledge. After a few years' peace, Sir John assisted the Earl of Montfort, son of the Countess already spoken of, to recover back his territory against the Lord Charles of Blois. A battle was fought at Aury, where Sir John captured the celebrated Bertrand du Guesclin, who was esteemed the best knight in the French service, also the Earl of Auxerre, the Lord of Raix, a "wonderful hardy knight," and performed such feats that the battle was speedily won. Several other battles were fought, in which he, as usual, proved victorious. He now accompanied the Prince of Wales to set Don Pedro of Spain upon his throne of Castile, of which he had been dispossessed. A battle was fought at Navaretta, in which Sir John directed every movement, and achieved a brilliant victory. When Don Pedro was placed upon his throne, the Black Prince and Sir John returned with the troops to Aquitaine, where the latter remained until war again broke out between England and France, and the services of Sir John were once more brought into requisition; and in various expeditions he proved the victor, taking towns and castles as though nothing could stand before him.

At length the time arrived that was to end his career. An abbey, named St. Salvin, in Poitou, which commanded the town, was treacherously betrayed into the hands of the French by a monk, and was garrisoned and fortified so strongly, that it could not be taken without a great expenditure of blood and treasure—probably of time. Sir John Chandos was greatly enraged at it, for it belonged to him, and he swore, if only for the insult of stealing it from him in this fashion, to make those who had taken it pay dearly for their treachery. He devised several means, by escalade and by assault in the night and day, but from want of numbers and means he could not succeed; stratagem alone could gain it for him, and the governor was so watchful and vigilant he detected every effort made. At length, one night Sir John sent to the barons and knights of Poitou to come secretly to him, for he was bound on an expedition. He was instantly obeyed, for he was adored. They set out one night without knowing whither they were going, but well armed, and the soldiers bearing scaling-ladders and everything necessary for carrying a town by storm. They were led to St. Salvin, and then Sir John made them acquainted with his intention. They were about to place the ladders, but the arrival of a troop of French to the castle roused it, and believing they were discovered, the English and Poitevins retired, and went to a town called Chauvigny. Sir John would have attacked the fort, but he knew it would cost a large sacrifice of life, and possibly without success—and, therefore, did not attempt it. When they arrived at the little town, the Poitevins requested of Sir John to tell them if he longer needed their services; he replied in the negative, and bade them return. He seemed singularly dull and thoughtful, but knowing that he was usually grave in his demeanor, little notice was taken of it; he entered an hotel, and seated himself before a fire of straw which his herald was kindling for him. Lord Thomas Percy inquired of Sir John if he had made up his mind to remain here, and he replied in the affirmative. Sir Thomas then requested leave to depart with his followers and seek some adventure, to which Sir John assented, saying—

"In the name of God, go!" He was now left alone with his own immediate followers, and he sat very thoughtfully before the fire, his whole thoughts fixed upon Rubacelle. Even to himself it appeared singular why he should thus think of her; but, although he could not explain the reason, he felt as though he was about to set out upon a journey to some far place where she resided, and meet with her, no more to be parted. Thought after thought thronged upon his brain respecting her, and her grave, which he had every year since her death visited, and found

always a bank of fresh flowers, which seemed now to stand brightly before him. He had never married, never cast his eyes lovingly on any other female: she had been his *only* love, and no other ever took her place. As he sat there, he forgot all but her, thought of her sad fate until the tears rolled down his cheeks. His people saw his silent melancholy, and did all they could to rouse him, relating jokes and pleasant stories, but in vain. At last, of himself he rose up, and inquired if day had yet come; ere a reply could be given, a man suddenly appeared, saying he brought news that the French had taken the field; they had set out from St. Salvin, for he had accompanied them, and taken, he believed, the road to Poitiers. Sir John inquired who led them, and the man replied, Sir Louis de St. Julien and Carnet le Breton. Much to the surprise of his people, he exclaimed—

"Well, let them go, I feel no inclination to follow them—there are others to intercept and chastise them as well as I." He then reseated himself, and remained very thoughtful for a long while; then of a sudden he sprung to his feet, and said, "Notwithstanding what I have said, I will go; it will soon be day, and I must return to Poitiers." He bade them arm themselves, and mount their steeds, which they gladly obeyed, and they set off, taking the road by the river side to Poitiers. The French were about a league before them, intending to cross the bridge of Lussac. As it grew light, the English discovered the footsteps of the Frenchmen's horses, and suspected that either the Lord Thomas Percy, or the French were before them. As the latter drew nearer the bridge, and it grew light enough to distinguish objects, they perceived Lord Thomas Percy with his men on the opposite side of the bridge, and the noble saw them. As the French had the superiority of numbers, Lord Thomas hastened to gain the bridge, and the French spurred their horses to prevent them. The English, however, were successful, and, dismounting, prepared to guard it. When the French arrived, they also got off their horses, and prepared to give battle to the English, who firmly waited the assault. As they were about to commence, Sir John Chandos arrived with his people, and with great glee prepared to attack them. They had often made great boast of what they would do when they saw him, and now he said he would give them the opportunity of proving their words.

"I am Sir John Chandos!" he cried. "Look at me well, and put to the proof your boasts and vauntings."

Sir John then dismounted, followed by his men. He was so eager to attack, that he rushed forward, throwing himself headlong at the enemy. It unfortunately happened that the ground was covered with a hoar-frost, and was very slippery; his armed foot trod upon some ice, and his legs being entangled in a long sarcenet robe, he stumbled forward, and at the same moment received the spear of a French squire, a strong stalwart man, in the eye; it penetrated to his brain; the squire drew out the spear, and Sir John, in the most frightful pain, fell to the ground; "he turned twice over in great agony, as one who had received his death-wound." His followers, on seeing him fall, were enraged to madness; it was so unexpected, so unlooked for; they were, for the moment, almost paralysed. The French, however, gave a great shout, and made a rush to get at the body. Sir Edward Clifford, the uncle of Sir John Chandos, leaped forward and stood over it, fighting desperately, and keeping all at bay who attempted to lay hands upon it. The Bretons and French, who were twice the number of those with Sir John Chandos, roared out with delight, crying that they would take them all prisoners, for they could not escape them. The English returned their boastings with a shout of defiance, and a squire of Sir John Chandos, yet a youth, one whom he had brought up and was very much attached to, when he saw Sir John fall, uttered a cry of rage and sprung upon James de St. Martin, the squire who had struck down Sir John Chandos, and attacked him furiously: he fled, and Sir John's squire, still further enraged, dashed after him, and darted his spear through both his thighs; the man fell, but rose again, and believing he could not survive, stopped and fought. He was, however, soon cut down, and the squire turned for a new foe; he soon found one, for his companions were completely surrounded, but they formed round Sir John's body and resolved to perish rather than it should be taken.

The fight was most desperate, and all this while Lord Thomas Percy never advanced one step to the rescue; he was still on the other side of the bridge, which was built, after the architecture of the period, so high in the middle that those at the foot could not see over it. As he did not see the French advance, he thought they had retreated, and with his men quitted the bridge, continuing their route to Poitiers, without having any idea of what had transpired at the scene they had just quitted. The English fought bravely. Sir Edward Clifford still stood over the body, supported by Sir John Chambo and Sir John Cassalies, and still resisted every effort made to capture the body. The English disdained to ask for quarter, and refused to surrender; but the French made so sure of capturing them that they despatched a number of their party for their horses, in order to carry off their prisoners, but the servants they had left in charge of them had fled and carried them with them. They were rather in a quandary about this, and despatched a few Bretons to find them, who, however, quickly returned, with the intelligence that a large party of Poitevins, to the number of two hundred lances, were advancing upon them, and the French and Bretons were struck motionless with fear; they, however, soon recovered themselves, and said to Sir Edward Clifford and the English whom they had *not* yet captured, but intended as soon as they could—

"We surrender ourselves to you. When the Poitevins come up save our lives, and say we are your prisoners."

The English assented, and just as they did so, the Poitevins arrived, and were about to attack the French, when they cried out they were prisoners already, and the English attested it; they were, therefore, unmolested. But as soon as it was known Sir John Chandos was mortally wounded, it was with difficulty they could keep the Poitevins from cutting the French to pieces to a man. They had all adored him—every one loved him; and when they beheld him lying dying, they were almost speechless with grief. Sir Guiscard d'Angle, who led the Poitevins, and who was very much attached to the gallant knight, wrung his hands as he stood over him, and cried—

"Oh, Sir John Chandos, Sir John Chandos! beloved of all! flower of knighthood! accursed be the hand that forged the lance thus wounding thee!—doubly accursed be the hand that dealt the blow!"

Sir Edward Clifford knelt down and supported his nephew upon his knees beneath a large tree, and was so affected, that he could not articulate a word; he sobbed bitterly, and all the knights around were much affected. Sir John heard the lamentations—

for he was not dead, and could make no reply but feeble groans, which added to their discomfort, as they knew the agony that he must be enduring.

After a little while he was released from his armour as carefully and gently as they could accomplish it, and then a litter was made of targets, shields, and spears, upon which he was laid tenderly. And then he was borne at a very slow pace to Mortemer—a fort, which was the nearest place to them where he could receive relief from his dangerous wound, and then every attention was shewn to him, every effort made to prevent life departing, but in vain. He suffered the most intense agony from his wound, nor could the best skill of the physician relieve him from the frightful pain. He lay moaning in a low, feeble tone, and seemed perfectly unconscious of everything around him: and thus, enduring a torture which made those around him pray he might be speedily released from, he lingered until the following night; and then he suddenly sprung up on his couch, stretched forth his arms, and exclaimed, in a voice that was clear and startlingly loud—

"I come, I come, my own beloved Rubacelle! Ah! thou dost smile and wave me on! I shall be thine, whom I have so long borne in my heart—thine, my best beloved! There is a glory round thee that dazzles my eyes, and makes my heart feel faint with joy, and bliss, and happiness! Still dost thou wave me on with that kind smile, whose brightness equals the golden beams of radiance that encircle thee with such intense brilliancy. I come, beloved! I come, Rubacelle!—thine—for ever thine—thine!"

He ceased speaking as suddenly as he had commenced. He remained with his arms outspread, and a smile of joy on his face for a minute, then it faded all away, and he fell back heavily upon the couch dead!

Of all those who stood around, none knew to whom he alluded—of whom he spoke—when he uttered his last words; but they knew then why he had ever been grave and sad, and had never cast his eyes upon the fair forms of beautiful maidens with delight, or ever tendered his hand to one, so that she might be of his heart and home.

And so passed away the spirit of as noble and chivalrous a knight as ever graced the annals of history—his name shedding a lustre on his order, and his deeds upon his name. Daring and courageous in the field to an extent almost unparalleled, and in private and peaceful scenes of so quiet and amiable a nature as to make himself adored by all. As Seneschal of Poitou, he made himself beloved by the people he governed, so that none more bitterly than they bewailed his loss; and to Edward—as a subject, a servant, an ally, and friend—his death created a vacancy he could never hope to fill. Those who knew him well—who had served with him, fought by his side in many a bloody field, and quaffed with him the rich wine at feasts and festivals—felt that a friend had gone from among them whose like they should never see again. There was not one in England, nor in the provinces which for some time he so ably and kindly governed, who did not regret him deeply, and sincerely mourn his death. The general body of French alone were glad to hear that he was gone, for they were rid of a powerful enemy, who, like Sir Walter, had conquered them in every engagement he had fought with them; still, even among the French knights who loved honor and chivalry for its sake alone, independent of the country beneath whose banner its feats were displayed, regretted that so bright an ornament to their order should have perished, and perished in such a fashion. There was also another cause for their regret, which was, that being sick of so much wasting war, the country being devastated and miserably impoverished, they had hoped, through his mediation, that peace should be made between the two countries, and they knew that his nature was so honorable in all its bearings, that in whatever articles of agreement and treaty were proposed to them, he would not permit their honor or their interest unjustly to suffer. Thus went the death of Sir John Chandos through all the countries of Europe as a matter of grief and regret—a sorrow which was as honorable to him as it was sincere.

He was interred at Mortemer, and upon his tomb is his epitaph in Norman French, which has been thus translated:—

I, John Chandos, an English knight,
Seneschal of all Poictou,
Against the French King oft did fight,
On foot and horseback; many slew.
Bertrand du Guesclin prisoner, too,
By me was taken in a vale.
At Lussac did the foe prevail;
My body then, at Mortemer,
In a new tomb, my friends inter,
In the year of grace divine,
Thirteen hundred and sixty-nine.

After his death Sir Thomas Percy was appointed Seneschal of Poitou. His estates fell to the King of England, and his riches, to the amount of four hundred thousand francs, to the Prince of Wales, "as he was never married, and, therefore, had no children."

In all the contests with the French, in this and the succeeding reign, there was no name held in higher, and, with the exception of Sir Walter Manny, none in such high estimation as that of this noble knight; and, to conclude in the words of the quaint old chronicler, "God have mercy on his soul! for never since a hundred years did there exist among the English one more courteous, nor fuller of every virtue and good quality than him."

CHAPTER X.

"About the year 1350, a dreadful pestilence spread itself westward through every country on the globe, and reached England." ALLEN'S LONDON.

"And so wasted and spoyled the people that scarce the tenth person of all sorts were left alive."

STOW'S ANNALS.

"About this time the gallant knight, Sir Walter Manny, departed this life in the city of London; for which all the barons and knights of England were much afflicted."

FROISSART.

"A good man was there of religion,
That was a pouré parson of a town;
But rich he was of holy thought and work.
He was also a learned man, a clerk
That Christe's Gospel truely would preach;
His parishens devoutly would he teach.
Benign he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversity full patient." CHAUCER.

"One of the collectors of the poll-money went to the house of one Walter the Tyler, in the town of Dartford, and demanded the tax for a young maiden, the daughter of Walter. The mother maintained that she was but a child, and not of the womanly age set down by the Act of Parliament. The collector said he would ascertain this fact, and he offered an intolerable insult to the girl; 'and in many places they made the like trial.' The maiden and her mother cried out, and the father, who was tiling a house in the town, ran to the spot and knocked out the tax-gatherer's brains. The neighbours applauded the deed, and every one prepared to support the Tyler. PICT. HIST. ENGLAND.

FOR nearly ten years did Wat Tyler live with Violet in uninterrupted felicity. Everything seemed to prosper with him; his grounds and cattle were fertile and productive; his neighbours sincere friends, and his friends not less warm and sincere than dearest relatives. Days passed on so happily—it seemed wonderful to find how rapidly they flew. He lived in close companionship with Michael, as of old, and never at any time, or under any circumstances, did aught arise to damp their friendship, or bring a shade of gloom or ill-will on either of their brows while they were together. Their children had grown up fair and smiling, and frolicked together as friendly and lovingly as their parents had done in years gone by, and it seemed that there could be nothing which could interfere with or destroy their happiness. But, alas! at a time the least expected, a change came to pass which caused a revolution in Wat's situation which was no less entire than it was terrible.

About the year 1350, a pestilence, of the most frightful nature, traversed the globe westward; it took England in its way, and its ravages were awful. People in all parts died in hundreds—nay, thousands, village after village was destroyed by this unsparing human slaughterer—few escaped. In London, its effects were dreadful; indeed, every cemetery and burial-place of all descriptions were filled with their dead, until there was no longer room to receive them. Then various pieces of ground were purchased and assigned for them; and, among others, an extensive piece of waste land, now called the Charter-house, was purchased by Sir Walter Manny, and presented to the sufferers to lay their destroyed relations in; and some idea of the extent of this dreadful pestilence may be formed, when, in this place alone, *fifty thousand* bodies were buried. Sir Walter, at this period, proved himself as reckless of danger and death in the midst of this horrible visitation, as he had ever shown himself in the field. He visited the people in all parts, and did his utmost, by his personal attention and his purse, to soothe and relieve their sufferings and miseries. An old historian, Henrie, thus writes respecting him:—

"It pleased God, in this dismal time, to stir up the heart of this noble knight to have respect to the danger that might fall in the time of this pestilence, then begun in England, if the churches and churchyards in London might not suffice to bury the multitude. Wherefore he purchased a piece of ground near St. John-street, called Spittle Croft, without the bars in West Smithfield, of the master and brethren of St. Bartholomew Spittle, containing thirteen acres and a rood, and caused the same to be enclosed and consecrated by Ralph Strafford, Bishop of London, at his own proper costs and charges."

Wat Tyler, in his humbler sphere, was a noble imitator of Sir Walter's most noble example. Brenchley was visited by the pestilence, and in spite of every precaution, the inhabitants were thinned in the most woful degree. Not a morning dawned but some family brought forth its dead—not a dwelling but had its dying beneath its roof; all were sufferers more or less—still all were sufferers.

Wat went here and there administering such help as lay in his power and was needed; he expended his property unsparingly to restore and save those who, without his aid, must have perished. The widow and the fatherless were befriended by him; the despairing cheered and encouraged; the sick and helpless soothed and kindly attended. His house was one of the last to suffer, and when the fell visitant came, it was with a heavy hand—both Halbert and Ghita were destroyed; Wat's parents followed, and then all his children—all, all "at one fell swoop." Violet, too, was attacked, and he knew not one hour from another that he should not stand alone on his desolate hearth, without one relative in the wide world. He bore up against it manfully; but it was a dreadful struggle to endure, to see all he loved and prized on earth thus torn from him, and not sink under it; yet he did not, for he knew that if he was seized there would be none to help them, and thus he steeled his heart against all fears of the contagion, and attended them all unceasingly, unwearyingly; there was nothing they required or wished for which he did not procure for them—an attention which he did not show; and as they each sunk under the ravages of the disease, it was with a prayer to Heaven on their lips for his safety and happiness, and they all died—all, save Violet, and he hung over her, morning, noon, and night, cooling her fevered brow and parched lips, and administering everything that could in any shape relieve her from the pain she endured, and he prayed in an agony of earnestness every hour that she might not be taken from him—that his last tie to earth, his last hold on life, should not be removed by death's iron hand. Gladly would he have offered his own life to have prolonged her's, and in his despair was little less than delirious; but at length, to his joy and thankfulness, the disease quitted her. It left her a helpless wreck, but it spared her; and though his fatigue had been tremendous, he never tired nor ceased until her cheek had once more resumed some of its bloom, and she was enabled to leave her sick couch and appear again by her fireside, sad and weak from her bereavement and illness, but still removed from the pale of the terrible pestilence. When she

had thus recovered, then, and not till then, the stern determination that had supported Wat through it, all gave way, and he fell into a dangerous fit of illness—not the pestilence, but an exhaustion of his faculties, brought on by his tremendous fatigues and fearful anxieties; and tender and solicitous as he had been for Violet, he did not surpass her in her care and anxiety for him. She never quitted his side, was patient, faithful, and attentive to the last degree; she watched his every look, anticipated his wants and wishes, supported his feeble head upon her bosom, and wept over him, when, sunk in sleep, he could not see her tears and be pained in witnessing them. He was delirious for some time, and she could scarce keep him from acting madly under the influence of some frightful imaginings; but at length the same clemency Heaven had shown to her was extended to him, and the fever passed away, leaving him, as it had left her, reduced to the last extremity.

It was at this time that Michael showed the truth of his friendship for Wat. He had lost all his children—his mother, Flora's parents, and all the kindred she possessed, by this fearful plague. He had himself, as well as Flora, been attacked by it, but they both recovered, and although suffering from weakness and anguish at their irreparable loss, they assisted Violet in her fond attentions to Wat, never leaving her or him while their services were required—regulating the household, attending to the culture of the estate, labouring with such servants as were spared, and endeavoring to restore the confused affairs which these sad circumstances had so considerably disarranged, into something like order; and disregarding his own diminished health and his own disordered affairs, he worked like a slave, that when Wat recovered he might not come forth and find matters in such a condition that he might bring on a relapse in his efforts to arrange them as they were originally.

When Wat was restored to health, and able to come forth and see what Michael had done for him, he knew not how to thank him, and so expressed himself; but Michael would not receive thanks, nor acknowledge he had done more than his duty bade him—and Wat could only press his hand with the earnestness of one who makes that pressure a symbol of his most loving friendship. Brenchley, however, was no longer an abiding place for him—its charms were fled; its associations called up too many painful recollections for him to remain, and his proposition to leave was eagerly assented to by Violet, who could not remember her beautiful little ones, and look upon the places their presence had made a paradise, without feeling bitterly how much she had lost in their death. It was too much a place for tears to ever hope to live there happily, and she most readily seconded Wat's wish to leave—the more especially as she perceived he regarded every spot that he had once viewed with delight with a downcast brow and sad looks. Michael was surprised at first, but a moment's reflection made him see the policy that dictated it, and he not only expressed his entire concurrence in the design, but said he too would leave the place of his birth, and sojourn with them on whatever spot they chose to set themselves down. This was no more than Wat had expected of him, but still it made his heart glad to hear him say so. No time was lost in arranging their plans to carry out their intentions, and they parted with their property to the King's commissioners for comparatively a trifle to what it was really worth; and despite the persuasions, the entreaties of the villagers to remain, and their loudly-expressed sorrow for their departure, they quitted Brenchley, never more to return to it as an abiding place.

Wat Tyler could not find it in his heart to leave the county in which he was born, although he quitted the village, and therefore he chose Dartford to reside in; and here, instead of engaging in agricultural pursuits, he turned his attention to forging armour, a craft he had been fond of in youth, and which, during his residence in Brenchley, he had frequently pursued for recreation, working hauberks, helmets, breastplates, and swords, to the great admiration of Leowulf, who followed his trade after his return, having obtained, through Sir Walter Manny, a release, and had wedded the maiden in whose sight he had found favor upon Wat Tyler's wedding-day. Wat had a strong motive in doing this, for during the pestilence he had expended so much of his property for the relief of the sufferers, and parted with his land for so small a consideration, that it became necessary to add to what he had left, to make him support Violet in as great comfort as he had hitherto done; but this he did cheerfully, because he had a taste for his employment, and his skill was so great that he speedily found constant employment, and, save the thoughts of those he had lost, he lived comparatively happy with Violet. Michael assisted him in his workshop, and Flora helped Violet in the domestic duties, and, as far as might be, they were contented and happy.

Year passed on after year, each one presenting some painful matters for the people, either in the shape of scarcity of corn, levying of taxes, or a revisiting of the plague. In 1360 a large body of French landed in Sussex, committing frightful ravages, and a large armament was fitted out, which pursued them, landed on their coast, and returned the compliment in a tenfold degree: but all this added to the expenses of the country, and caused an increase in the taxation, which the already over-burdened people were ill able to support.

In 1361, the plague re-appeared, and committed great havoc; and again in the year 1369 it destroyed a vast number of people, and rendered everything scarce and dear, and difficult to be obtained by the poorer classes, who, with their scanty incomes, and the excessive taxation, were barely able to obtain the common necessaries of life, and but little redress was obtained for their grievances by petitions and memorials, and murmurs and discontent everywhere prevailed, and promised soon to break forth in a tumult which it would cost very much to appease.

Previous to this, at the close of the year 1365, Violet had a daughter, and this child was exceedingly lovely—in fact, was in all things the counterpart of what her mother had been. Being the only child, they idolized her, and in every way she repaid their love and care. As she grew up, she became the pride of Dartford, as Violet had been of Brenchley; and ere she was twelve years of age it was astonishing to see what a number of contests there were between the lads in the neighborhood for the honor of her smile. Wat, in the mean time, had become the head of Dartford—was completely idolized by the inhabitants—was their chief adviser, their arbiter in all their disputes, whose decision was final, and always by the loser respected. He had in Michael a loud trumpeter of his worth—who took care that no one in Dartford, soon after their arrival, should be in the dark respecting who had come among them. The villagers soon found that his praise was but little exaggerated, and Wat Tyler became the reverenced and beloved of the place.

Thus passed away the time until the year 1372,

when Wat received a hasty summons to visit London; he was sent for by Sir Walter Manny, and found him stretched on the bed of death. As he entered the chamber, the noble knight smiled, and stretched forth his white emaciated hand, and welcomed him warmly; he then made every one quit the chamber, and was left alone with Wat. He paused for a moment, and then said—

"My good friend, my old companion and partner in many hard-fought contests, I have sent for thee to part with thee for ever — at least in this world."

"I hope it is not so," ejaculated Wat, fervently.

"Indeed it is," replied Sir Walter, "my physician assures me I have but a few hours' life, and so you see I am fighting my last battle with him who was never defeated. Well, it is a lot at which I grieve not; I have lived for fifty-eight years a life of honor and renown, and I must not sigh because it will not last for ever. Do not regard me with that mournful face, Wat; rather smile to think I am about to enter the presence of Him before whom we must all appear, and may, I think, hold up my head erect with the consciousness of never having done a shameful act or any deed that might call forth His wrath. I have not been without my sins, but I thank Heaven they have not been of a nature that shall make the Almighty, when I enter His presence, turn the light of His countenance from me. But no more of this—death is our common lot, and it has ever been my study to bear cheerfully that for which there is no help; you have seen that in the most important circumstance of my life, I mean my love for Violet. When I found that she was for another's arms and heart than mine, I schooled myself to bear what I could not turn to my own wishes, and succeeding in that, I can look on the slow approach of death with a calm smile, as I am sure you will when your hour comes. I have sent for you, Wat, for I could not die in content had I not seen and spoken with you: some years have passed since we met, and you have steadily refused every offer I have made to better the condition which the pestilence and your own sad losses have reduced you to. Perhaps you have done wisely, at least you have acted independently, and with the same proud spirit that always characterised you; still I would you had consented, because then I should have felt assured that you esteemed me more as a friend and brother than as a donor or patron."

"And so I ever have, Sir Walter," cried Wat, warmly, "ever as a kind and sincere friend; but understand my motive, Sir Walter. In refusing your generous offers, I but acted on the same feeling that would induce me to refuse of my father a favor I could do without. I never esteemed your kindness nor friendliness less, nor was less desirous to be under an obligation to you; but I did not need your bounty, and, as I told you then, there were hundreds of others who did, and I should feel the favor no less if you had bestowed it on them than if I had myself received it."

"I did with the bounty as you desired," replied the knight. "But though I acknowledge I admire the spirit which prompted you to act thus, I would sooner that you had complied with my wishes; however, it is past: and though I thought from your long absence my offer had raised in you a feeling, if not of offence, of coolness—yet I did not believe it would have entirely estranged you; I have, therefore, desired to see you, that we may part as good friends as we were in our earlier years, that I might remove from your brain all traces of a desire to wound your pride, and to believe only when I existed in your memory, that I felt and acted as a true friend to you—nothing more nor aught less."

"Sir Walter, I never entertained for one instant a belief that you had the most latent desire to hurt my pride, or insult my feelings, in proffering your assistance to me," exclaimed Wat. "I could have but one idea, that in this, as in all things, you were actuated by a desire to do me service; and I fear that my refusal was too abrupt and positive, making you deem me ungrateful and forgetful of all your noble behaviour to me. However, let these words of mine remove any impression contrary to my deep gratitude; never, at any time, from the first moment I joined you in Edward's service until now, did I receive from you an act or look at which I could take the smallest ground for offence, but always held you in my heart, if possible, higher than a friend, and never less than the most devoted."

"It is enough, Wat; I am entirely satisfied," replied the knight. "We are as we were of old, and that feeling robs death of one of his pangs. I should have—I should have wished—that is—— Why need I hesitate? I could have felt my death-pillow smoother and softer if my dying eyes had beheld Violet. I have never forgotten her, Wat, but ever, though my hand and name is another's, kept her where my first love placed her. I say not this because I would have had you bring her hither, for there are many things which would have rendered such an event unfeasible and improper. I say that I would wish to have seen her ere death closed my eyes, inasmuch as she was the only one who ever had my heart—and she still dwells there as brightly as when soon after I first beheld her, and knowing not she loved, believed I could make her mine: that dream faded, but not the hold she had made upon my heart, nor has it, nor would it, though I lived until doomsday. Bear my last remembrances to her—I cannot clothe them in words: the devotion of a long stirring life has been her's, and could that be formed into a sentence and uttered in the last breath that faded from my bosom, it should be hers. May she be in all things most happy. God guard! guide! and bless her!"

He ceased, and covering his face with his hands, seemed overcome by emotion. Wat did not interrupt him, but waited with an overcharged heart until he should again address him; he did not keep him very long, for he removed his hands, and showing his eyelashes wet with tears, he smiled and said—

"You see, Wat, a death-bed will make the strong weak. Well, well, it is over, never to recur again."

He paused for a moment, and then he again proceeded, still smiling—

"It seems that I cannot offer you a token of my esteem in the shape of wealth, because with some grave face you would return it, and with an ominous shake of the head, bid me bestow it on the needy. I have, therefore, made your fair daughter a present, which she will in due time receive, and when she cannot, instigated by you, return it. Say not a word upon the matter; it is done and cannot be altered," he exclaimed suddenly, on perceiving that Wat was about to speak, and fancying that he was about to decline it, which was not Wat's intention: he told him so, and explained that he was only about to thank him.

"No thanks are due, Wat," exclaimed Sir Walter, "you deserve more; you ought to have been a belted knight, and I take shame to myself that you are not; I could have accomplished it, and I ought, but it is useless to indulge in vain regrets; it is now too late, the opportunity has passed away, and you are still the humble Wat Tyler, though in true worth and

nobility of heart equal to the most puissant crowned head in all the world—therefore dost thou owe me no thanks for this trifling deed, or any other. Give me thy hand, Wat—we must part, and that speedily—for I have one who waits anxiously without, one who loves me sincerely, and has ever proved herself a gentle and affectionate wife; she knows that I have not many hours to live, and she would be jealous and angered with any one who would rob her of one minute of them. Farewell, my good friend! We part as men who have seen such service as few have—who have laughed death so often and so coolly in the face, should part—freely, and frankly, and cheerfully, without a tear, a sigh, or a useless regret; and you shall shake my hand with the same feeling as though we were to see each other i' th' morn, and you shall go from hence believing I am journeying to a far land, but that ere long we shall be again in each other's presence. Farewell, Wat, my best wishes are with thee; thou hast had my sincerest esteem and friendship—thou wilt bear with thee a dying prayer for thy welfare. You remember the grip of the hand we gave each other when we dashed into the thickest of the fight, amid a storm of arrows, bolts, bills, swords, and battle-axes—that grip is thine now with the same heartiness as at that moment. Ho! who waits there?" he cried, suddenly. A servant entered instantly, and then he continued—

"Farewell, Wat; I see thy heart has seized thy tongue; no matter. God bless you. Farewell for ever!"

Wat wrung his hand, and not daring to trust his voice, hurried from his presence. In a few hours afterwards the gallant knight had ceased to breathe. He died very calmly, retained his self-possession to the last, and his spirit fled even while he was smilingly uttering some gentle consolation to his wife, who, with a grief which could only express itself in a torrent of incessant tears, knelt by his side, and received his last sigh.

It is needless to say with what deep regret his death was attended; it would be of little use to observe that all the common people, as well as the nobility, were much grieved at his loss, because the reader will easily understand that one who had been so noble and benevolent, would not die without being generally mourned. It would not, either, be less than a task of supererogation to speak of his estimable qualities, his many virtues, and his brilliant gallantry: his actions speak for themselves, and those who are conversant with the history of the period, will easily perceive that his character and achievements, in this humble record, have not been exaggerated.

His funeral was magnificent in the extreme; it was attended by "the king, his children, and all the barons and prelates in England." He was interred with most solemn ceremonies in the Monastery of the Carthusians (now the Charter-house), which he had built upon part of the ground he had purchased there. There were many thousands of the citizens there, and not one who was not afflicted at the loss they and the country had sustained in his death. His property was chiefly left to his wife, and to John Earl of Pembroke, who married his only daughter, Anne; but a very handsome bequest was made to Wat's daughter, which she was to receive when she attained her twenty-first year. Wat stayed in London until the funeral was over; and then, with an oppressed heart, he returned to Dartford. He related to Violet his interview with the knight, and she wept to hear that he was dead, and could not but feel deeply his last testimony of the affection he had felt for her. Previous to this, Wat had heard of the death of Sir John Chandos; he felt very sorrowful for it, and when this last death occurred, it made him feel dull and low, and possess a presentiment of some coming evil. He strove to shake it off, but it clung to him in defiance of all his efforts. He succeeded in not letting those around him know the weight that was on his soul, and to them he appeared the same as usual; but there was an incubus dragging at his heart which made him restless, and almost unhappy, and yet scarce know wherefore—it was the dim shadowing forth of what was to come. All men who accomplish great enterprises, or are fitted to fulfil some extraordinary destiny, possess it: the time was drawing on when Wat's was to reach its height and conclusion.

In 1376, Edward, the Black Prince, died, bewailed by the English universally. To him they had looked up for everything in the shape of reform in the legislation and preservation of the country's honor abroad: he died, however, and with him fell most of their hopes. His father, Edward, had degenerated from the bold, active, generous monarch, to the imbecile old man, alike a prey to a designing mistress and rapacious courtiers. In 1377 he also died, in the fifty-first year of his reign, and his grandson, Richard the Second, a boy of eleven years old, came to the throne. The people, who had been ground almost to powder, and were still in a horrible state of vassalage, began to resist the numerous burdens which were imposed upon them; they could not pay them and live, and the collectors made them pay whether they could live or not. Men were beginning to perceive they were born to be something else than slaves, and to find that the accident of birth did not constitute a sufficient right for a man to be deemed an hereditary bondsman; there were many who were bold enough to advocate this doctrine publicly, and in two or three years after the accession, the people began to question the right they had to be taxed beyond what their incomes would by any possibility bear. Through most of the counties of England this feeling spread like wild-fire, and not last in Kent. In Dartford, the people all referred to Wat Tyler: he knew more than any one in the village, and his advice was the best law to them; by the desire of the people, he frequently met them in the market-place, and discussed the question. He used but the simplest arguments, and those all based on strict justice; and as the immoderate taxation was against all reason and justice, and the laws of vassalage as well, and as he scorned to utter a falsehood or mis-state his opinions, he advocated a less taxation and a greater freedom—in fact, an entire enfranchisement of the peasantry. It may be easily supposed that his auditors, chiefly sufferers, coincided with him, and looked upon him with more affection than ever.

At this time, too, there was a priest, by name JOHN BALL, an enthusiast, who followed his religion for religion's sake. This man was much in advance of his period; he was well-informed, and well-intentioned; he was a radical of a nature that astounded "the powers that were"—an aristocracy so very high in Toryism, they could believe no improvement in the people's condition less than a crime, for which there was no punishment bad enough. All who attempted to show that the people's necks were bowed down, trodden on, and they were fools to submit to it, were stigmatised as "scandalous and wicked traytours;" and the idea of abolishing villanage was greeted with a shout of scornful laughter. The nobility believed the poorer people were born to slave and toil, to labor only for those on whose estate they were brought into the world, to have no voice in anything—to be in fact, what they were, degraded slaves.

It is a fact too well established to enlarge upon, that as a country advances in its population and knowledge, emancipation from slavery and oppressive enactments follows in its wake. There are always men whose minds are in advance of the time—men who, in general, are bold and fearless advocates for truth and justice—men who know the relative positions of the rich and poor in the eye of justice, and who fear not to publish it—men who side with the oppressed against the oppressor—the crushed against those who crush—the despised against the despiser—men who think the laborer worthy of his hire, and when they see every effort to take from him his labor without giving him an equivalent, step forth, and with a voice that will be heard, advocate his cause, denounce the injustice, and demand the restitution of his rights.

John Ball was such a man; he was a priest, but one who had dedicated himself to his fellow beings in the service of God; he was a mendicant friar, and most religiously fulfilled the vows of his order; he was poor—poor as the humblest serf in the kingdom. He devoted his whole time among the poor, and took not from them what they could ill bestow, although his mildness and goodness had won such favor with them they would cheerfully have supplied his wants if they had themselves to want.

When this disaffection began to spread among the vassals of the various counties of England—when the constant demand for the State to support the war—the glorious war, as it was called—to establish the claim of the English king to the French crown, impoverished the people until all their means were exhausted—then John Ball, in his own province, came forward and harangued the people, bade them move his Majesty, by petitions and prayers, to consider their miserable condition, and instead of prosecuting, at the expense of blood and treasure, his claim to France, to ameliorate the suffering condition of his people. John Ball's advice was followed; they did send petition after petition, but in vain—fresh taxes were imposed and rigorously exacted, and all their appeals and prayers were unheeded.

But a short time previous to this, John Wickliff published his disbelief of several articles of the common doctrine, and had several followers, besides a patron in John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, son of Edward III., who had a magnificent palace in the Savoy, and who, by means of a "huge rout of retainers," was little, if any, inferior in power to the king himself. His conduct at the Synod, convoked by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Bishop of London, to try Wickliff, at the command of the Pope, Gregory XI., in making Wickliff be seated before his Judges, caused a tumult; and as he was universally hated by the people, who, with good cause traced the most of their oppressions to him, this tumult terminated in an attack upon his palace by a mob of citizens, which they plundered, and then dragged his armomial bearings contemptuously along the street. He was enraged beyond description at this; and albeit the Mayor and Aldermen tried to appease him, he would be satisfied with nothing but their removal, and the filling their places with his creatures. This was an affront which the citizens were obliged to bear, but only waited an opportunity to bitterly revenge. When the time came they did not forget to have their full share of it.

In France and in Flanders, the miserable state of the peasantry, the oppressions and exactions they were subjected to, similar to those which in England the poor suffered, induced them to revolt, and the news spread like wildfire through England, where everything was ripe for open rebellion. The peasantry, the greater proportion of whom were serfs, and bound to the soil, to be sold or transmitted to different estates like cattle, were treated like brutes—mere machines without souls—in fact, as anything but fellow-creatures, save by some few of the lower order of secular clergy, who, like John Ball, were heart-sore to see their grievous condition. They began to learn that they were of the same flesh and blood as their lords, and resolved no longer to continue the slaves they had been; the townspeople, too, were united with them in one common cause—they were drained of their hard earnings to support the war, and the extravagancies of a riotous and debauched court. Their grievances were unredressed, their rights and property unrespected; they were made the prey of the rapacious and grasping courtiers, and were compelled to bear the yoke with every contumely and scorn: it was beyond the limits of human endurance to continue thus, and they waited but a leader to start forth to rise up as one man and compel the redress they had been so long in vain praying to be granted them; and soon he was forthcoming, and when he appeared the whole nation rose in arms.

"In an evil hour," says a modern historian, "Parliament passed a capitation tax," the levying of which caused the most formidable insurrection ever seen in England. The conditions of the tax were, that three groats were to be paid by every male and female of or over fifteen years of age, but in the towns and cities the aggregate sum was to be divided between those who could ill afford and those who could well afford to pay it; but no one was to pay less than one groat, nor any one more than sixty groats. The people, however, who were already groaning under the pressure of an overload of taxes, viewed this fresh impost with loudly-expressed discontent, and by many with a stern resolution not to pay it. As this was expected, it was at first levied with mildness, and to a certain extent succeeded in its object; but it was farmed out to a number of wasteful and extravagant courtiers, who went to the Lombards and Flemish merchants and raised money upon it. They immediately set their own collectors to work, and finding it did not yield so rich a harvest as they expected, they ordered their people to exact every farthing with the utmost rigor, and to suffer none to escape and elude them whom they thought were of age. This order arose from the difficulty which was naturally experienced in discovering the ages of those who were bordering upon fifteen. It was hard to decide whether a boy or girl of fourteen and a few months were really under the age, and, in fact, many of the poorer class, in hopes to escape the tax, vowed that children of sixteen were under age.

The Flemish collectors, a set of brutish fellows well fitted for the task they had undertaken, were resolved not to be thus deceived, and, in many cases, resorted to the vilest and most disgusting means to ascertain the truth. These outrageous insults to the modesty of young maidens thus infamously treated had as yet passed unpunished, though loud complaints were made: it materially hastened the crisis that was approaching; the brows of men grew sullen and gloomy, they met in corners, and conversed in little groups, and when they dispersed they bore burning eyes, compressed teeth, and clenched hands. The storm was fast rising up which would cause so much devastation when it burst: few were seen to smile, but there were stern glances exchanged, hands were silently but firmly grasped, and weapons were secretly but rapidly gathered in all directions. The collectors, however, went on in their task, performing it with

the same brutality as ever, occasionally getting an unmerciful thrashing from some offended brother, father, or lover, whose daughter, sister, or beloved, had been subjected to their brutal insults, and at length they made their appearance in Dartford.

It was a bright clear morning when they came, and the first house at which they called was Wat Tyler's. He was absent when they arrived, but was only a short distance from the spot conversing with a large number of townspeople upon the monstrous tyranny of one Sir Simon Burly, who, with a number of his people armed, had entered Gravesend, and out of spite for a resistance of some villany the knight would have perpetrated against his honor, seized a man who had lived there some years, claimed him as an escaped bondsman, seized him and dragged him away. Now it was the law, that if a "villain," or serf, lived for one year and a day in a town, he acquired his freedom, threfore Sir Simon's act was the more monstrous, and the little group who were with Wat vowed they would submit no longer, and resolved to convey their intention to all within a hundred miles, and collecting in a large body, advance to Rocester, attack the castle in which the serf was confined, liberate him and whoever they might find there, and then march to London, and demand a full redress of their grievances of the King. They begged of Wat Tyler—he who had been in so many fights, had led on warriors to battle, and knew well how to conduct a large band of men—to be their leader; they had every confidence in his courage, his discretion, and his wisdom; they knew that he coincided in all their opinions respecting their condition, and the right as well as necessity that existed for their emancipation from slavery, misery, and ignorance. He did not—could not decline their earnest wish, and consented readily, resolving to risk his life to obtain for them a change so desirable, so great and good. While telling them this, a shriek, loud and piercing, that went to their hearts like the entry of a barbed arrow, filled their ears. It was known the collectors had arrived at Dartford, and the cause for the outcry was at once guessed. The cry came from Wat's house, and the antelope, in its extremest swiftness, was not more fleet than Wat in flying to his house. He was followed by Michael, who, if not so young in years as he had been, was so in every feeling and attribute, and followed Wat as nimbly as though he was still a youth. Many accompanied him, and not a few at once rushed to seize their stored weapons.

The collectors were in Wat's house; they only saw Violet, Flora, and Wat's beloved daughter, who had but a short time since turned her fourteenth year. The tax was demanded of Violet and Flora, and for the daughter, who was named Rubacelle, by Violet's own desire, in remembrance of the gentle Flemish maiden. Violet acquainted them with her age, and her consequent exemption from the tax, but this they would not acknowledge, and made many brutal remarks upon her beauty. One of them, a fellow who by some extraordinary freak of justice had escaped hanging, was the most boisterous, brutal, and filthy in his remarks. Although it was early in the day, he was full of strong drink, and displayed his natural scoundrel's predilection in the most undisguised manner; and upon Violet, with clasped hands, trembling so excessively she could scarce stand, assuring them she told them truth, this ruffian advanced towards Rubacelle, and seizing her, swore a fearful oath that he would prove her a liar. The affrighted maiden broke from him, aided by Flora, who, with a spirit almost surprising, fastened on his face with her nails, and laid his cheeks bare in long streaks from his eye to his chin; with one blow he dashed her to the ground, and rushed at Rubacelle, but Violet in agony of fright threw herself before him, offered to give him the tax ten times over, if he would depart in peace; his only answer was to hurl her out of his path, and seize the terrified girl, whose piercing shrieks told her situation to her father. She had not been a second in the villain's grasp, ere his two companions found themselves thrown violently to the ground, and Wat at his forge; he seized his heavy hammer with one hand, and with the other he caught the fellow by the throat, with a grasp that would have throttled a lion; Rubacelle was released from his embrace, and the next instant the wretch's brains were scattered about the place by one tremendous blow; he had not time to groan, but fell dead upon the ground, and his companions fled; they were encountered at the door by Michael, who in one glance saw all that had occurred, but suffered them not to escape until they were beaten to a jelly—then he run through the village and proclaimed to all Wat's deed, and ten minntes had not elapsed ere five hundred men surrounded his house, all well armed, vociferating their hearty cheers for what he had done, and begging him to come forth and lead them; having in some degree soothed Violet and his daughter, he did come forth, bringing with him the dead body of the ruffian he had slain. The sight of the corpse was greeted with cheers, and then they prepared to hear what he was about to say to them.

"My good friends and fellow-sufferers," he exclaimed, pointing to the body, "you here see the result of injustice and oppression; this is the consequence of an attempt to crush, where it should be the study and policy to foster, cherish, and improve. This ruffian, who lies here a bleeding corse, slain by my hand, in the brutal discharge of duties, in themselves oppressive and unjust, has met with the fate he merited. I have, as you know, one only child, the darling of my heart, the pride of my soul—"

"And of our village," cried a young enthusiast, standing closed to Wat.

"I love her dearer than my life, and would not see her suffer a pain or pang for the empire of the world. She is gentle and good, nor in thought nor deed ever gave me or her beloved mother one doubt, or fear, or shade of displeasure."

"We know the sweet child well," exclaimed an elderly man; "she is beloved by us all, more for the beauty of her disposition than for the beauty of her person, though that might gain her the love of all who beheld her. A harsh word, or a base look, or rude behaviour to her we should feel as a wrong to all; nor is there one here, young or old, who would not resent it—is there, neighbors?"

"None, none," cried the people unanimously.

"Then, good friends," continued Wat, "when you know that the wretch at my feet laid his infamous hands upon her to offer the most brutal insult, the most vile outrage ever inflicted upon a maiden, is there one here who will condemn me that, in the heat of my rage, I slew him, so that none others might suffer from his brutality?"

"You did but your duty, Wat Tyler," exclaimed a man who was evidently of a better class than a villager, and whose stalwart figure and resolute sternness of countenance made all he said have much weight with those around him. "You have done your duty," he continued; "had he a hundred lives they were all forfeited; and had the first scoundrel in levying this tax, who perpetrated this vile, intolerable insult, been thus punished, it might have

taught his companions a lesson they were not likely to forget."

"I would to God!" cried the youth who had before spoken, with clenched hands and a flushed face, "I had been there ere he had first laid his filthy hands upon the dear maiden. For one look that indicated his damnable purpose I would have hurled him from thy roof, and stretched him dead ere he could have offered to renew it."

"I doubt not thy friendliness nor thy courage, nor thy readiness to have saved her from this outrage, my gallant Rubric," exclaimed Wat, addressing him, "but, I thank Heaven, it has fallen to my lot to avenge her. His deed and his punishment have passed away; not so that of those who set him on this duty; and it remains now for you to say whether you will longer submit to have the sanctity of your homes violated with impunity, your daughters subjected to insult it makes honest men shudder to think upon, and yourselves treated with scorn, contumely, and rigor. Impoverished in every way—your labor, hard and wearisome, as it is compelled to be, devoted to purposes which benefit you nor your fellows nothing—which steeps you in poverty and wretchedness to the death, and all to plant a king where he has no natural right to reign over a people who hate him and his nation, who are natives of the soil, and have an undoubted right to elect a sovereign of the same country as themselves. The produce of your hard earning is wasted in this manner, and also to support a set of vultures who hover at the court fattening on the gifts of the king—gifts which are not his to bestow, but trusts placed in his hands for the benefit of the people at large. They are squandered and wasted in riot and debauchery, and you must work and starve to contribute to it—and you, the producers of this wealth—the beings without whom it could not exist—are treated as dogs, nay, worse; for you have reason and mind, and are treated as the most miserable reptile that crawls on the face of the earth. The time has come when there must be a change—a great and glorious change—and the people must work it themselves, for it is for them the good of the change will be! There is such a thing as bending the bow until the cord gives and the bow rebounds and strikes the bender; ye have been bent and bent until you can bend no more. Let those who have bent ye thus beware of your rebound! Are ye prepared to be the first to show the people of England that their grievances must and shall be redressed?"

"We are!" the people cried with one shout.

"The poll-tax has not been paid in Dartford! will ye follow my example, and refuse to pay it at all, resisting every effort to levy it?" he exclaimed.

"We will! we will!" was the reply.

"Then, friends, assemble here in your strongest numbers to-morrow morn at day-break, and let every man bring as many friends as he can, and with whatever weapons he can gather. The death of this dog," he said, spurning the body of the dead tax-gatherer with his foot, "will bring upon us the visit of some armed men to seize me, and make me an example to all who dare refuse to submit quietly to be the victims of the worst and direst oppression. I may need your aid, and I fear not that you will grant it to me."

"You shall have it," cried he who had before spoken. "They shall make this village a desert ere we yield you up; and woe to them if they attempt that, for then London shall become a howling wilderness, and the crowned king a thing to mock at. There are those in Essex, and in other parts of the country, who have sworn to do this if they have not their requests, which are but just demands of what is justly their due, granted to them. I will meet you here in the morning, and bring with me a thousand, aye, ten thousand men, an' ye need them."

"You are a good friend, indeed," exclaimed Wat Tyler, regarding him earnestly, "and promise not only generously but boldly. May we know your name that we may possess thankful remembrance of one who stood us in such stead in the time of need?"

"What I have been matters little," exclaimed he; my former condition, my name, or my family, is of no service to the cause; know only that I am a sufferer by these oppressions to the fullest, furthest extent, and that makes me a common sharer in the deeds ye mean to do. I am one, also, who is not blind to the gross and unnatural distinction which is made by the rich to separate them from the poor—from those who present them with the very wealth upon which they presume so greatly. I have made myself known to my fellow men in the counties on the other side of the river, and they know me for their staunch friend, and stern, unchangeable advocate. They knew not who I was or what I am more than do you; and because I have taught them to believe that kings, and princes, and nobles are but men of straw, they have given me the familiar title, in speaking of me, to distinguish me from others, of—JACK STRAW."

The name which had already become famous was speedily recognised, and the bearer of it greeted with a loud cheer; he, however, waved his hand for silence, and then turning to Wat Tyler, he said—

"The hour is come! you have in your own person been grievously outraged and insulted, beyond what any man, possessing your feelings, would tamely bear; you see, too, and feel deeply, how the poor people have been ground to dust; you have hitherto, by words, advocated their cause, you must now by actions, and prove yourself the friend you have professed yourself to be."

"I am ready to support by my deeds whatever I promise by my words," exclaimed Wat, proudly.

"Those who know Wat Tyler have not that to learn," exclaimed Jack Straw; "we have met before, Wat," he added, "but under what circumstances, and at what time, must remain to be explained at another time. You must be the leader of the whole people—nay, start not! In a tremendous assault, when the cheek of the oldest and best English soldier was blanched with little less than fear—when the most experienced knight and leader would have turned back precipitately, I saw thee, Wat, with a smile on thy face, cut thy way through an opposition that seemed impossible to surmount, advancing against thrice thy numbers, and by thy great judgment, as well as undaunted bravery, carrying thy point where even the great Edward, with his whole army to back him, would have had to retire discomfited, nor have thought his retreat degrading. I marked you well, and to myself said, should the people need a leader in any great struggle for freedom and release from the most bitter thraldom, this is the man. Many years have passed since then, but I never forgot thee; I learned much of thee from one, who, God rest his soul! is with the blessed—the brave, and good Sir Walter Manny; and what he said, confirmed my opinion of you. The whole of Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Suffolk, Cambridge, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Norfolk, and the counties adjoining, are ready to rise to a man, and I came hither, having traced thee to Brenchley, and from Brenchley hither, to make the proposition, little expecting—though a moment's reflection teaches me I might have done—to have witnessed this scene, or have had so strong

an advocate in my behalf as yon silent wretch there. Now this has come to pass I do not beg the favor, but demand it of you; your knowledge of military evolutions will be of eminent service to your followers, and should a collision with the troops take place, which I scarce expect, doubting their courage to oppose the vast superiority of numbers which we shall have on our side, we shall need your judgment to prevent their having the advantage which strict discipline and entire obedience will give them over us. Say you will be our leader, and in the morning you shall have a body of men under your command, which shall laugh to scorn all efforts to capture you, if the boy Richard come hither, backed by a numerous army; and shall in all things obey your will as implicitly as the veriest machine in the shape of a soldier the army can boast."

"I will be your leader," said Wat, warmly.

A deafening cheer from the multitude, which each moment had increased, responded to his words. He waited for a moment until they were silent, and then said with much fervency—

"I am in my sixtieth year. I have lived a long and hitherto a happy life, and by the bountifulness of God, I am strong and hale, and with the strength possess much of the freshness of youth. My chances of living many more years are perhaps considerable, perhaps few, but were they so great as to make my sojourn among ye for half a century to come, providing I shared not your cause, I would fling it aside, and heading you, lay down cheerfully to die the moment you had obtained the redress of your wrongs—but in accepting the leadership of so large a body of men, I know a task the most arduous will devolve upon me, inasmuch that many ill-disposed ruffians, for the sake of plunder and outrage, will enrol themselves among those who seek but the freedom and the welfare of themselves and fellow men. To those around me then, I say, we unite to demand of the King an amelioration of our condition, and an emancipation of slavery; and in our efforts to obtain it, let us remember, that in requesting restitution for outrages, let us inflict none; if we have been wronged, we must not wrong others, especially those who, having been common sufferers with us, cannot afford to be still further pressed down by us; I mean those living in the villages and towns through which we shall pass. On our way to London, let every man pay for what he has; and let him who seeks to plunder, or offer outrage or insult to maidens, be punished."

"With death!" exclaimed Jack Straw. "Your proposition is noble, and I can answer for the people of Essex and the adjoining counties, that they will swear to observe this, and of themselves seize and punish whomsoever they detect in any such base acts."

"I will answer for the people of Kent," cried Michael; "I am a Kentish man, and your true Kentish man will never do a vile act, or stand by and suffer one to be done in his presence."

"Hurrah!" shouted the Kentish men, with a stentorian strength that sounded like a roar of artillery.

"If every well-disposed man in this vast assembly but thinks thus, we shall teach these upstart nobles a moral lesson which they will not lightly forget," exclaimed Wat, earnestly; "we shall teach them that though bowed down, trampled on, held as dirt, we know better what is due to honor and justice than them; and having all good men's opinions in our favor, cannot fail to ensure the success of our just enterprise. I reiterate my promise—I will be your leader, and in all things true to you while you are true to yourselves. At daybreak I shall await you on the heath, and our first deeds shall be to release the good John Ball from his shameful imprisonment in Maidstone gaol, and the freed-man whom Sir Simon Burly has so basely seized and borne to Rochester Castle, and then our next step shall be towards London."

Again the men cheered enthusiastically, and then peaceably separated, bearing with them the dead body of the tax-gatherer to bury in an obscure spot. Jack Straw was the last, and ere he departed he took Wat's hand, and grasping it warmly, said—

"Farewell for the present—we shall meet in the morning to fulfil our great and solemn duties. By those who fear us, who have revelled in luxury, in riot, at the expense of the blood and sweat of the poor people, we shall be stigmatised as arch rebels, as wicked traitors, and no name so vile as they will not endeavor to fit upon us; but, Wat Tyler, personal considerations must give way to general good—we must rob the people of much of their misery, and the haughty and wealthy nobles of their arrogance, their selfishness, and their power to keep their heel on the necks of those whose labors make these butterflies the gaudy things they are; the voice of freedom has gone forth, and there's not a hollow place in all England shall not echo it. Merry England, with her broad lands, as she was once known, shall again be the merry, happy place she was ere these grasping heartless nobles turned it from a paradise to a vale of misery."

"Long has my heart been wrung in witnessing the sufferings of those around me," replied Wat. "I have seen families thinned by the pestilence to a frightful extent, and seen these people, who, during this terrible visitation, had lost their all, when scarce recovered, pale and weak from their long illness, work and labor hour after hour incessantly, to meet the demands for taxes—their gaunt and blanched cheeks showing that famine as well as disease was busy there, and that the produce of their long and weary exertions went to support a state that yielded no protection to them, nor held out any hand to assist them. I have seen them drop day by day dead at their labor, and turned from the dreadful sight with an aching heart to look on others more sickening, more painful still. I knew, I felt this could not, must not, last. I saw men grow more thoughtful, more gloomy, sad, and sullen than I had yet seen them; no smile of joy—oh, God! joy! it is almost a mockery to name the word—ever illumined their countenances; they greeted each other without a welcome—they left each other without a 'God be with you;' men were sold like cattle in the market-places, and their children, serfs still, if males, mostly drafted to the wars to expend their best blood in a war which brought them nothing but toil—not even honor, for they were not known in the mass, however good or gallant they might be; and the daughters were made to serve, if handsome enough, the brutal lusts of their lord, and then turned out to labor in the field. I have said to myself, God never created human beings for a bondage so frightful as this—we are of one kindred—one flesh and blood; no man was born slave to another, though accident made one a prince, and the other a peasant—experience will teach men this, and when they display their knowledge, let those who have trampled on them beware. The time has come for the yoke to be cast off, and if they be but united and true to themselves, they must be FREE, and begin a new era in their history."

"They shall be true to themselves, if strong words and good example can make them so," cried Jack Straw; "and if they are not, they deserve to bear the

chains their supineness and want of perseverance has failed in ridding them of. But this is the last thing I fear: those with whom I have held communication are fathers and brothers, they have wives and gentle ones at home to remember, and their considerations and recollections of them alone will preserve them from the display of any weakness, which may cost them the destruction of their long-cherished hopes; but should there be a disposition for this madness—it will be nought else—sudden and terrible example must be made with the chief defaulters, and a strong hand and watchful eye be kept over the rest. God help them! they have suffered so much, we must make them free even if they themselves throw obstacles in the path; and, removing from their own firesides the misery which has so long clung to them, make them see too strongly the value of the gift to hazard by any future lethargy a repetition of what they have suffered. You have a strong arm and a bold heart—there is something about you,—I scarce know what it is—which commands the hands and hearts of men; let your followers, and they will be tens of thousands, but know you, and they will follow you to the death, bend to the wave of your finger, and yield implicit obedience to your commands. You can obtain an influence over them and you must, the very strongest man can obtain over his fellows, for you will find it necessary frequently to exert it over men who have drank of misery's bitter cup so long, and so deeply, that when they come to taste of its reverse, they will get intoxicated with their success and act like drunken men. Your authority and stern sense of justice shall be supported by a band of picked men, who know well what they have to gain in the acknowledgment of their claims by the King and Parliament, and will obey your slightest nod. I must now leave you, for every moment is precious; I have many miles to traverse, many men to assemble. Farewell, may God support our cause!"

He shook Wat's hand with a firm grasp, and was about to depart, when Wat exclaimed hastily—

"Stay!"

"Well," he said, on observing Wat hesitate.

"You tell me we have met before," replied Wat, after a moment's pause.

"We have!" he answered with emphasis.

"Will you inform me where?" returned our hero. "I have perused your features again and again, yet cannot trace in them the likeness of one whom I can call to memory as having ever known; still there is in their expression, at times, a look which reminds me of some friend I knew years agone, but my recollection is faithless, and thy name is buried in its treachery."

"Thou may'st in vain peruse the lines of my face to discover the features of one you once knew well," replied Jack Straw, with a mournful smile; "for much anguish will change a man's features as long wearing will his garment. It is plain you remember me not; ere we part for ever, an' thou dost not discover me, I will throw off the veil, and hide my name no longer from thee; at present ask me not what I am ill disposed to answer, and until the time for explanation comes, know me only as Jack Straw.—Farewell!"

"As you will," returned Wat; "at day-dawn we meet."

"Even so," replied he, and once more shaking Wat's hand warmly, he hastily departed.

"It is strange," muttered Wat, as he disappeared; "I feel satisfied I know him, but my memory will not serve me in disclosing him."

"I, too, know his face, and when next we see him I dare say I shall be able to tell who he is; but at present it is useless to attempt it, for the more I try the farther off I shall be," exclaimed Michael, and then continued: "Well, once more we shall be in action, after a lapse of so many years, and you, as you ought to be, still at the post of honor. By the Mass! it is long since I wielded a sword, but I don't think I shall quite forget its use. I say, Wat, we'll show them a little of the play we treated the French to, when in Brittany, and the South of France, eh?"

Wat regarded him seriously for a moment, and then said somewhat in a tone of disappointment—

"I had hoped, Michael, you would have remained with Flora and Violet and my beloved Ruby, to guard them during my absence, but I perceive it is a vain hope."

"Indeed, it is," replied Michael, hastily. "I feel, Wat, I ought to do so, but I cannot; it is useless to disguise it, I have not the power to stay away. I will see that they are carefully attended to; I will take care that there will be those about them who will sooner part with their lives than harm should come to them; I will do all that is necessary to ensure their safety, but I must follow you to the field. We were brought up boys together—we have fought side by side when death encompassed us—we have lived in happiness and adversity together—we have shared each other's fate till now, and come what may, I still will be at your side, to wade our way through peril and turmoil to victory, or die as I have lived, still in companionship with you."

"I know well your staunch friendship for me, my old friend," replied Wat, "and I know, too, that talking to you to persuade you from your purpose will be words and breath expended in vain. I will, therefore, say no more of the matter. Let us enter and prepare for to-morrow; it will be an important day in my life."

"And in the People's," said Michael.

"Ay, and in King Richard's, and in the high and mighty of the land," added Wat, and entered his dwelling as he uttered his last words, followed by Michael.

CHAPTER XI.

"And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns,
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones. SHELLEY.

"My good friends
Heed well your danger, or be resolute!
Learn to laugh menaces and force to scorn,
Or leave me—I dare answer the bold deed."
SOUTHEY.

"The commons of Kent now rose as one man, and being joined by a strong body of the men of Essex, who crossed the Thames, they fell upon Rochester Castle, and either took it or compelled the garrison to deliver up Sir Simon's serf, with other prisoners." PICT. HIST. ENGLAND.

MUCH of what had transpired without the door of Wat's dwelling, had reached the ears of those within. In those days, much more than in the present, there was such "divinity did hedge a King," and the King's name was such a tower of strength, that the very idea of rising up to resist a power always looked upon as so formidable, seemed in the eyes of the weak and timid a proceeding which was no less wicked than mad and presumptuous. Horrified by what had taken place in her presence, Violet was overcome, and rendered full of the worst apprehensions; added to her shock of the insult, and the sight of the summary punishment which the ruffian had justly received, there came the fear of what would happen to her beloved Wat for slaying the King's officer. Thousands of rumours and stories were afloat, in most cases untrue, and where true exaggerated, of the terrible fate which had attended those who opposed the tax-gatherers in the performance of their duty. In all the cases, however, that had met her ears, she had heard of none in which death had been incurred by the collectors; and yet, if the stories told were true, many had lost their heads for refusing to pay, or were left to pine hopelessly for ever in a dark and loathsome dungeon. These tales were rife in every one's mouth; all were more or less interested in them, and they were passed from mouth to mouth through all the counties in the country, the tax-gatherers themselves facilitating their circulation, with the idea that the apprehensions the people would entertain at incurring a similar fate if they proved factious, would assist them in a readier collection of the odious imposts.

The remembrance of these wild tales and fearful rumours run through Violet's head with terrible vividness, and she immediately conceived a horrible idea of what would be Wat's punishment for slaying the collector, when death or perpetual imprisonment was inflicted on those who merely resisted. With increased alarm, too, she listened to what had transpired between Wat and the mass of the people without, and the most dismal forebodings took possession of her, that the time was come when he whom she had for so many years loved better than aught else in the world beside, were to part for ever, and that in a manner which would be violent and replete with anguish; when, therefore, she saw him enter the cottage, she advanced hastily towards him, and flinging her arms about his neck, sobbed upon his bosom in a paroxysm of the bitterest agony. Wat tried to console her as she wept upon his shoulder, but she was too much overcome with the saddest expectations to be enabled to shake off the weakness that oppressed her.

"Nay, Violet," exclaimed Wat, as she still continued in her violent grief, "this is unlike you—this is a weakness I knew you not to possess: who was it, when bowed by sorrow, and sickness, and the sight of miseries that lacerated my heart with the keenest pain, and which I could not retrieve, that cheered me and taught me to be resigned and cheerful even under the heaviest dispensation—was it not you, my beloved? Was it not you, when our sweet children were all taken from us, not even the youngest spared to us—when thy dear parents and mine were swept away—and when there seemed nothing left in the world to bring us joy again—was it not you, Violet, who twined your arms about my neck, and though the bright tears were glistening in your eyes, smiled, and bade me view our bereaved state with calmness, for though all the world had been taken from us, we were still left to each other? You had strength of mind then, you could hide your own anguish, which must have been keen and bitter; you could bend your sorrow, great as it was, to your will; why not now, when you have less than ever to fear—less then ever to be sorrowful for?"

"Oh, Wat, Wat!" she sobbed, "I have now more to grieve for than ever I had—more, much more."

"More?" he asked in surprise.

"Oh yes!" she returned, "you have slain the King's collector, and the King will take thy life in return, and there will be none to help thee, none, none!"

"There will be a hundred thousand men to say him nay if he attempts it," cried Wat, in proud exultation. "The wretch who polluted our beloved child by his base hands, I slew as I would a rabid hound, or wolf that had attacked her; he inflicted an outrage out of the pale of his duty, and he has been punished for it, and should have been though he were thrice ten thousand times a King's collector, and my life a hundred times more endangered by it. What! are we not enough crushed and kept down by unjust exactions, and by oppressions which men were never made by the great and good God to endure, but we must submit to the vile outrages and insults of the base myrmidons of our oppressors, the slaves of tyrants, the reptiles that, devoid of honesty and honest feelings, carry out with disgusting brutality the infamous decrees of the villains in power? Fear thou not, my beloved Violet, fear thou not for me; the King, puissant as is his power, dare not lay one finger of punishment upon me for slaying his collector, unless by the consent of those who will be cut to pieces ere they suffer me to come to harm. No, Violet, the time has arrived when a change must take place, and the power that will work it is far greater, if they but confide in their own strength, than that which can oppose it; your tyrants are always weak in courage and firmness, and we shall advance upon them with a force that might have made the bold Edward himself, whom nothing daunted, quail with apprehension. I shall lead them on, Violet—I, the humble smith of a humble village, will head them, and teach these proud oppressors that those who produce shall not be shut out from their proper share of what is produced—shall not toil and toil, and slave and work to keep a few in fat idleness, and gorgeous luxury, and they be compelled, with all their weary labor, to lay down exhausted at night, and know there is scarce to break their fast with i' th' morning when they rise, to continue the toil they have had so brief a release from. No, Violet, this shall have an end, and brighter days are in store for us, should we be spared long enough to see them. Dry thy tears, therefore, my beloved; believe me I am safe from the King's wrath: he will have to pluck me from

the heart of a hundred thousand men to take me, and trust me he will consider twice ere he attempts that one act."

"And think you not," exclaimed Violet, "that flying thus in the face of the King's authority, bearding him thus on the threshold of his own palace, in the heart of his power, that you can escape being captured by his vast number of troops, and be punished by the rack, and other tortures too dreadful to think upon?"

"Discard all such thoughts at once, my beloved Violet," interrupted Wat; "my knowledge of the King's resources and our own, tells me we shall be twenty to one, and I have not to learn what may be done with a superiority of numbers if judiciously directed. Again let me entreat thee to dry thy tears, for thou hast nought to fear, but much to make thee proud and glad; for misery will be made to hide its head, and freedom and prosperity, and, therefore, happiness, shine through the land."

"Still, Wat, I feel a foreboding of evil to thee which affects me so deeply and strangely, that thy words, consoling as they are, touch me not," returned Violet, "it is a presentiment of the worst—a feeling that we are speedily about to part for ever; it may be weak and foolish, and even criminal, to thus anticipate the Almighty's fiat, but I cannot shake it off, it hangs upon my heart as though it were dragged down by iron weights; however, I will endeavour to rid myself of it, and look cheerful for thy sake. But I would thou wert not going to lead the people, or even to join them; it is a selfish wish, for it seems that your consent to lead them is the seal to your death-warrant. I confess I have no right to feel this, and ought to know by my own heart how dearly the people prize you, that they will not suffer evil to fall upon you if they can avert it; but the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, and though the people, Heaven knows, have right on their side as well as numbers, it may so occur that they are discomfited, and those who have been their chiefs be visited with the most dreadful punishments."

"I do not believe, dearest Violet," returned Wat, "that the King will dare oppose us with force of arms; he will, indeed, be ill-advised if he does, and in case of such an event occurring, the contest will be but short, and end in his overthrow. Still, should it so happen, you will not have to fear but the same Providence that protected me through the most sanguine battles on the continent, will not be withdrawn from me in leading on the people against their enemies. I shall leave you here to attend our sweet Rubacelle, with the full conviction that I shall be speedily restored to you, filled with happiness and honor, and with the people's rights and privileges so restored, and their condition so improved, that we shall have no future cause to heave a sigh at their or our own misery."

Violet suffered herself to be persuaded that she had no cause for uneasiness; and Wat viewed with pleasure that her face once more resumed its placid expression, if not quite so cheerful as heretofore, still not so very depressed as it had recently been; but he had on his heart the conviction that his hour had come. He could not see in what form or shape his death was to be, but he felt satisfied that it was close at hand, and that it would ensue during the attempt to emancipate the people from their sufferings; however it might come, he knew it would be great and glorious in its relations, and so he could well meet it with a good heart. It was hard to part with Violet—the long-cherished idol of his affections—but the separation must take place some day, and perhaps it was as well to come at a time when his exertions in the behalf of the multitude should make them for his sake reverence and honor her when he was gone. This expectation alone prevented him regarding the, to most persons, gloomy anticipations of coming death with a degree of complacency which robbed it of any appearance of sadness or depression. He would not, of course, suffer Violet for one moment to believe that he had this presentiment, nor by word or look show her that it had fixed itself immovably upon his heart beyond the power of any agreeable hope of the future to eradicate.

Michael, who had ever been, continued, and if he survived for an age, would still have been, the personification of sanguineness, saw nothing in the coming event but the prospect of happiness and honor to all, and he had contrived, during the many years which he and Flora had passed together, to imbue her with a considerable portion of that happy feeling; consequently she viewed his departure as he did—to be one only which should be productive of good in every way, and in the same proportion that he felt delighted to go, she felt glad, and certainly lent her ready assistance and tongue to convince Violet that there was nothing on earth which ought to make her prouder and happier, than for Wat to have been chosen the head of the people—and, to a certain extent, she was right. Rubacelle, the daughter of Violet and Wat, said nothing, but bore a heart oppressed to suffocation; she adored her parents, even as they idolized her, for she was the glory and pride of their hearts and home, and she felt as her father and mother did both, that her father would not be long among them; she, however, said nothing, indeed, could not trust herself to speak, and retired to her chamber to give way to the agony of emotion she endured but would not display, for fear it should add to her mother's unhappiness, and to her father's pain at parting with them. She believed herself relatively to be the cause of his hazarding his life thus, and in her grief wished that she had never been born, rather than have exposed him to danger. Her sorrow was observed speedily, for their loving eyes noted the change, even the slightest in her, but they attributed it only to the fear and excitement she had undergone, and believed that a little quiet and rest would restore her. They little thought that there were seeds of sorrow then sown, which it took years to eradicate.

When Wat and Michael had made such arrangements as they deemed necessary for the intended expedition, and had regulated everything so that during their absence neither Violet, Flora, nor Rubacelle, should experience any inconvenience, they went out among the villagers to see what preparations were being made. There was no stir, no sign of what was to come—all was still and quiet, more so even than usual; it was, however, the deceitful calm that precedes the violent storm, and as they visited cottage after cottage, they saw that there was not one who could bear arms who was not actively preparing to make one in this grand demand for their rights: many were away to rouse up others in neighbouring villages, and in those villages messengers were despatched to others remote, to summon the friends of liberty to join them.

The intelligence spread like wildfire—there was not a village or town around that was not ripe for revolt; they had only waited for one to lead them, and now he was found they were ready to flock in countless masses beneath his standard; the rendezvous was made known to all, and all resolved to be there as certainly as the daylight would appear in the heavens.

Precaution was, however, taken that none allied to the government should know what was going forward; they might have discovered that there was something on foot, but what it was they would be at a loss to discover; those who resided far communicated with those who were farthest, and many in the remoter villages set off before sun-down, that they might be at the place appointed by sunrise. Hundreds entered Dartford in the night, and as the dawn drew near there was not an approach to the village that was not positively thronged with people; masses, too, crossed the river from Essex in one continued stream, all pouring on to the place of meeting.

Wat rested but a few hours, and then left a couch where, overcome by feverish excitement, sleep was denied him; he had not quitted it many minutes ere Michael was with him, and as soon, Violet, Flora, and Rubacelle. A hasty meal was despatched, and then Wat prepared to part with those whom he was fully convinced he should never see again; the three had the same feeling, but at this moment would not for worlds have acknowledged it: perhaps the self-denial which each charged their heart with was more affecting than if they had parted with sighs and tears—each tried a smile, with a heart almost bursting with grief, and each found something to say, full of the fondest hope and consolation. Each cheered the other to the best of their ability, and few, but very close observers, would have discovered what aching hearts they all in reality bore. At last, with a strong exertion, Wat determined to say the hard word, farewell—and away to his post at once, that those who were expecting him might not see he showed a tardy spirit, or a reluctance to lead them on in their great movement; and so he rose, and taking his hat and sword—"the bonny five foot of fire-proved steel," which had been Leowulf's pride, and which he had presented to Wat years since, as a token of his esteem—he folded Violet in his arms and bade her adieu—it was a hard struggle to both, but with tremendous exertion they each kept their emotion under control, and he kissed her earnestly, saying, in a cheerful voice, he should speedily see her again, to which she made an inaudible reply, and bent her head low down to conceal the tears that would not be repressed. Rubacelle knelt down to him for his blessing, which he bestowed most fervently, for he believed he should never more behold her; then she embraced him—he smiled upon her as he pressed her warmly to his heart, and parted her hair to kiss her white brow, and said some cheerful words to her, to which she was about to reply, but the words were choked in the torrent of grief that rushed forth in spite of all her efforts. Poor girl! she had not the strength of mind she believed was hers; her power was unequal to control her grief, and she wept and sobbed as though her heart would break.

The barriers with which Wat had surrounded his heart, were nearly all borne down by this sudden and almost unexpected torrent of anguish, but by a great effort he kept down the emotion he felt; he would have said some kind words to her, but he found his voice quiver and tremble so as not to be trusted; he therefore kissed her passionately, and hard as it was to part with the gentle girl, his only child, the idol of his soul, he succumbed to the necessity, and motioned Flora to remove her; but she clung frantically to him, and would not be removed until nature, exhausted by the excessive grief she had indulged in—having wept the night away—could bear no more, and the poor girl fainted on his bosom to be carried to her couch by Michael and Flora. Wat dashed the rush of tears from his eyes that had gathered there, and folding Violet again to his heart, and pressing his lips to hers passionately, said—

"Farewell, my dearest, beloved Violet; the Almighty God cherish and protect thee: we may meet again on earth, if not, we shall in Heaven!" he kissed her once more, long and earnestly, and then tearing himself from her fainting embrace, he rushed from the house.

He pressed forward to the heath, and when he could recover in some degree from his emotion, he turned his head to Heaven, and pressing his hands to his breast, he exclaimed—

"That pang, the hardest I can endure, is over; and now, before God, do I devote myself, my suffering and beloved countrymen, to ye—fighting your battle, victorious with ye, or perishing among ye, if it should please Heaven to still suffer the power to wrong and oppress to remain in the hands of the tyrants."

As he concluded his words, he was overtaken by Michael, who said—

"That same parting is always disagreeable; I feel now as if somebody had stuck a dagger in my throat. People, when they are going anywhere, where it is likely they will not return for some time, ought to go without bidding farewell; the sight of foolish women in tears unmans one, and makes us as weak as themselves. I could have found it in my heart to shed tears just now, but that my manhood interfered and requested me to have no nonsense of that sort, and so I kept the shower off, but the sky was very cloudy for all that. I left Flora adding her tears to those of Violet, and as she bade me good-bye, she told me that if I staid longer than she thought there was any occasion for, she should come after me and fetch me home. I told her she would soon have to stand at the door and see us come back in triumph—Holy Mother!" he suddenly cried, pointing before him, "here's a swarm of men! By the mass! all the county is here. Why there are thousands here already. By a knight's spurs and emblazoned surcoat, but here will be a troop worth leading. This will beat the command in Brittany."

Wat did not need the aid of Michael's finger to discover the mass of men who were already before him, but observed almost with the same wonder as Michael the multitude that awaited his coming. He had expected to have seen some four or five hundred, but he saw twice as many thousand: his eye could not at one glance take in the circle they comprised; his heart swelled as he looked upon them, and there came on him the same enthusiasm as of old; he looked upon them with the same glowing eye, and the same readiness to show the way to the most daring and dangerous enterprise as when but a youth in the service of Edward, fighting beneath the banner of Sir Walter Manny. He quickened his step and was soon among them; as he reached them and was recognised, way was made for him until he reached the centre of this great multitude, and as he mounted upon a rise which overlooked them all, and rendered his form distinguishable, the sun suddenly made its appearance above the horizon; the arrival of both at the same moment was hailed as a good omen, and the whole of the vast assemblage sent forth a cheer which might have been heard for miles, and was repeated again and again. When silence was obtained, he addressed them upon the combination and its purpose; he enlarged upon the ills they had suffered, and the means of their redress; and wound up by bidding them understand that if he was to be their leader they must place implicit faith in him.

"I am ready to die in your service," he continued, "cheerfully, gladly, if my death will gain you a single good. I will exert my best strength and ability to serve you, and in return all I ask is obedience to my command until the end is gained, and then I will retire to my cottage again, the same humble villager I quitted it. I repose the utmost confidence in you—I expect the same from you, or I cannot take the leadership. The success of armies in the field depends in a great degree upon its strict discipline; a battle may be won by the sudden movement of a troop upon a point, or lost for the want of the timely arrival of a company to support a position at a critical moment. An entire obedience to orders will ensure success, where a tardy compliance will endanger it, perhaps cause its loss. I seek not to obtain a blind obedience, but as I shall require none but what will be conducive to your interests, I must have a decided one. I must be your leader or not. I will be responsible for my acts to the meanest among ye, but I must have your consent to abide by an act according to my orders; it is necessary for the general good that this should be done, and also that all personal feelings and desires should give place to the collective interest. If you do not accord me this I cannot take the command."

"We will obey you in all things," cried a number of voices, which was echoed by a hearty cheer, and just at this moment the numbers were accelerated by the arrival of an immense body of men headed by Jack Straw, who had crossed the river from Essex, with the mass of his followers. Their arrival was greeted with loud hurrahs, which sounded like roars of artillery, and they returned the salutation with deafening cheers: there was also at this moment another arrival, and the shouts of the people were again raised as a hundred voices cried in their loudest tones—

"John Ball! John Ball! John Ball! Hurrah!"

The crowd rocked to and fro as an opening was made, and the good man appeared in it, accompanied by a small band of young men, armed with various implements, headed by the youth Rubric, who had the previous day spoken so warmly in behalf of Wat's daughter, Rubacelle: they were covered with dust, and looked as if they had been performing fatiguing and hazardous service.

"My good friend, Wat Tyler," cried Rubric, advancing, and, seizing his hand, pressed it warmly, "we have been doing an act of justice, one which I believe will be agreeable to all here, and not least to thee. Yesterday's occurrence told me we should, under your guidance, strike a blow for our freedom at once; and as I knew how good a friend and assistant our reverend father, John Ball, would prove, I persuaded a number of bold lads to join me in going to Maidstone, and rescuing him from his odious prison: they gladly consented. We went last night and knocked the stone walls about the jailor's ears, and liberating our good father, brought him with us to join you this morning."

"You have done well, my good Rubric—right gallantly and well, my good youth," exclaimed Wat, fervently, "and merit all our thanks."

"A spirited, noble youth," exclaimed Jack Straw, overhearing the speech of each, and holding out his hand to Rubric, continued, "give me thy hand, youth; thou hast begun well, thou must be cared for, and must be near us."

"Let me be close to Wat Tyler—going where he goes, fighting where he fights, and obeying his commands in all things, is all I require," cried Rubric.

"You love him?" said Jack Straw, interrogatively.

"I should like to know who don't, young or old?" replied the youth, enthusiastically; "for my part I have neither father nor mother—I lost them both in the last visitation of the plague, but both Wat Tyler and his kind dame, Violet, have more than supplied their place, and I love them with my whole heart, and would die to serve them."

He might have added that he loved the daughter "with his whole heart" too, but as he did not deem it exactly requisite to mention that, he said nothing about it.

"You shall have your wish; you are a bold and a good youth," Jack Straw exclaimed, and then turned to welcome John Ball, whom Wat Tyler had already greeted with the warmest pleasure.

All this while the vast assemblage had been added to by the constant arrival of men variously armed from all parts of Sussex and Kent; they might still be seen thronging from every part, hastening to fill the ranks of those who had arrived before them, and by an hour after sunrise upwards of thirty thousand men had gathered together in that brief space of time, and still in straggling parties kept arriving and adding to their numbers. One little band from Brenchley particularly recommended themselves to Wat's notice, and begged to be under his immediate command; they were comprised of every one in the village capable of bearing arms, and almost with tears of affection in their eyes they vowed to follow him through every danger wherever he chose to lead them, and swore to be true and faithful to him, though all the rest deserted him. He gladly accepted their services, not only because he was affected by their kindness and devotion, but because it was policy, as well as good fortune, to have a hundred men at his command who would obey his nod under any circumstances; there were spirits who might need considerable control among the people, and here were those whom he could depend on to support him in the enforcement of it if necessary. The men were delighted at his acquaintance, and formed near him, ready to follow him the moment he gave the word.

After some consultation between Wat, Jack Straw, and John Ball, it was agreed they should fulfil their intention of proceeding to Rochester Castle, and setting the man free whom Sir Simon Burly had so shamefully taken as a serf and imprisoned in the dungeons of his castle; and then it was agreed that for the present Jack Straw should still lead the Essex men, and Wat Tyler, assisted by John Ball and Michael, the Kent and Sussex men. Accordingly, the men were given to understand upon what errand they were first to proceed, and they received it with hearty cheers; the strictest injunctions were given to them not to destroy life or shed blood unnecessarily, or to do any deed of violence which might be deemed unjustifiable, and above all, they were prohibited from plundering upon the penalty of being punished with death.

"We are not acting as robbers, but as people who are wronged, and are seeking a redress of their injuries. Let not one act of ours be tarnished or impugned as those of a factious wicked rabble, but let every deed be the offspring of stern virtue and strict justice," said Wat.

They all readily and immediately acquiesced in his commands, and set forward on their journey, Jack Straw leading the way with his Essex men, who, as they wound over the Down towards Northfleet, cheered our hero. As they passed, he leaned upon his sword, and regarded them with looks which were divided between the proud satisfaction of seeing them thus arrayed to boldly assert their rights, and the pain which the sight of many of their gaunt and care-

worn faces displayed; they swept on, armed with pikes, bows, spears, swords, and whatever came to hand. They bore banners with their weapons, and as they hurried on, Wat thought here was a vast engine indeed to direct the destiny of the country. It was some time ere the Essex men, although they went twenty abreast, were passed—and then there was the little band of Brenchleyites, among whom commingled were Rubric and his friends, waiting for Wat to take the post of honor; he leaped down and placed himself at their head, and they uttered a tremendous cheer; Michael, who had stood by his side returning the cheers of the men of Essex, accompanied him, and then they followed those who had gone before, and the whole body of the Kent and Sussex men moved on in their train. They were no very great time in gaining Northfleet, passing by the river side until they reached Gravesend, and then they wound up the hill through Milton, on their way to Rochester Castle. As they drew near to it, they observed that there was a great bustle on the walls, which soon appeared lined with armed men; the drawbridge was drawn up, and every preparation was made for resistance. The peasantry did not, however, heed any of these demonstrations, but kept advancing until they were all assembled in front of the walls; then they stopped, and summoned the Warder, who appeared, and demanded what was their reason for their appearing thus in arms.

Wat Tyler replied, by briefly saying—

"If Sir Simon Burly is within the castle, let him appear upon the walls speedily, and seek thou, as thou dost value thy head, to make no equivocation with him or with us; tell him there are thirty thousand people without who request speech with him, and if he refuse it, he shall not escape them, though he hide himself in the deepest dungeon within his castle, secure as he believes it."

The Warder retired without making any reply, and shortly reappeared with Sir Simon Burly, who, notwithstanding the accounts he had received of the formidable appearance of the insurgents, was astounded when he perceived them; he, however, would not show it, and haughtily demanded their reason for congregating and surrounding his castle.

"You have unjustifiably violated the laws of God and of man," exclaimed Wat Tyler, who conducted the parley for the people; "you have, against all right and justice, seized upon a freed man and confined him within your castle; we demand his instant release."

"You may demand what you please," replied Sir Simon, scornfully; "whether I choose to grant it is another matter. In this instance I beg of you to accept a flat denial. The man is my property; he is an escaped bondsman; I have succeeded in retaking him, and I intend to keep him."

"To echo your own words, Sir Simon," cried Wat, quickly, "you may intend what you please, but whether we suffer you to fulfil your intention is another matter. The man is not your property; he has lived unmolested for more than a year and a day in a town; he is, therefore, a free man. Beside, no man is your property, nor any man's, and those who at present hug themselves in the belief that they own so many serfs as they do so many cattle, and fancy they can dispose of them with the same freedom and indifference, will after this day find themselves mistaken. I will give you a quarter of an hour to consider, Sir Simon, whether you will deliver him up to us quietly, which will have the effect of making us retire without injury to you or your castle, or whether you will determine to resist for the sake of having the satisfaction of finding, in a short time, your castle about your ears, and yourself a prisoner at our mercy."

"I need not an instant to deliberate," replied the knight. "I will keep the man in defiance of your threats, and should laugh to scorn the efforts of thrice the number of such ill-conditioned rabble as those with thee, to carry such a stronghold as this."

"It will be as well for thee not to make too sure of thy strength," returned Wat, coolly. "I have assisted in carrying a castle of thrice the strength of thine, with less than a fiftieth part of those I have with me. I do not despair of becoming master of thee and thine in as little time as thou could'st tell thy rosary. Reflect ere you decide—it will be too late when the assault has once commenced. Do you yield your prisoner to us?"

"No!" roared the knight; "do thy worst—I defy thee."

"Thy blood and those around thee be on thy head," exclaimed Wat.

"And on thine!" cried the knight. "Beware how thou leadest on those miserable misguided men to their ruin and death, and look to thyself—for an' thou dost persist in thy base rebellious acts, thou shalt, ere thou'rt another hour old, swing from these walls by thy neck, as an example to the fools who suffer themselves to be gulled by thee."

"When thou hast taken me prisoner," replied Wat, "then mayst thou do what thou wilt with me; but remember, it is not every egg that becomes a chicken, and for all thy hatching, I think that threat is not one that will come to life. Once more I ask thee—Wilt thou yield thy prisoner, and spare thy possessions?"

"I'll no longer treat with thee. Crossbow-men, do your duty," shouted the knight. A shower of bolts immediately followed his words, and several near Wat fell. This act at once destroyed all desire to spare him or his castle on the part of the people, and Wat instantly prepared his men to assault the castle; the word was instantly passed for every man who bore a bow and knew well how to use it. In a few minutes there were a thousand men ready to do his bidding, and he ranged them along the banks of the moat, bidding them keep up a constant discharge upon the walls, which were lined with men. This they obeyed with such vigor and rapidity, "shooting so strong and fast," that the walls were speedily cleared, the men being compelled to keep under cover, and discharge their bolts through the embrasures and loop-holes; but with such limited opportunities for their skill that they could not do much damage to the assaulters. Wat next ordered a large body of men to cut down trees, and cast them into the moat, so as to make a passage over it, and by effecting a breach in the walls, gain an entrance. With the numbers he possessed, and all working with a will, this feat was soon accomplished, and a vast number of men passed over the fosse, and gaining the other side, commenced with pickaxes, which, in expectation of their present employment, had been brought by many, and by others who had no other weapons to arm themselves with. They soon made a desperate attack upon one of the towers, for being accustomed to such labor, they knew well how to make the best use of their implements; the stones flew in all directions, from the swift blows of their axes, and they would soon have made a breach, but the besieged brought a huge machine for casting stones down, and Wat's quick eye detecting it, he gave instant orders for his people to retire, and the first discharge of stones fell harmless to the ground;

however, as it would cause a destruction of life in persisting to make the breach there, for they could not get at those who managed the machine, he resolved to try another method. He observed that a strong wind was blowing, which blew from them to the castle, and he ordered a large quantity of the branches of trees they had at hand to be set fire to, which was quickly done, and the enormous volumes of thick smoke from the green wood and leaves completely enveloped those in the castle, and was so dense as to prevent them from seeing the insurgents. Under cover of this cloud, instant attack was made upon another part, and so great were the numbers who applied themselves to the task, that a breach was quickly effected, and when the first opening was made sufficient to admit one man, Wat dashed through it, followed by Michael, Rubric, and the Brenchleyites, a number still remaining to enlarge the aperture, and as it increased in size, the people poured through in hundreds. A faint resistance was made at first, but the numbers were so overwhelming, the men-at-arms and archers threw down their weapons and surrendered, and the castle became the possession of the assailants. Instant search was made for Sir Simon Burly, and he was soon discovered by a party who had roamed over the castle as soon as it was captured; he was with his wife and daughter, and was speedily dragged into the presence of Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Ball, each of whom had sent bands of men, upon whom they could depend, in various parts of the building, to restrain the people in any excesses which, in the first excitement of success, they might be disposed to commit. This was a step which circumstances proved to be highly necessary, and shewed at once the keen foresight of Wat in requiring implicit obedience to his commands: for already a few rough spirits displayed themselves impatient of control, and in defiance of strict orders, would have commenced plundering, assaulting a number of females who were in the castle, and even fired the building, had they not been actually seized and made prisoners in order to compel their obedience to the commands given; they were brought into the hall by a number of Brenchleyites at the same moment that Sir Simon and his wife and daughter were brought in by a party of Essex-men, who cried out—

"Here is the knight and his brood; we have them fast—we caught them endeavoring to escape by a postern, but we were too sharp-sighted for them. Ho! what is to be done with him that thinks honest men were born to be his slaves?"

"Hale him out! hale him out! and off with his head!" roared a hundred voices right lustily.

"Ay, hale him out!" roared one sturdy fellow, with a huge bushy beard, and long, wild, straggling hair; "but we'll keep the young chick—she's my prize, I captured her; come, give me a kiss," he added, turning to the daughter of the knight, and putting his arms round the affrighted maiden's waist. "By my faith! it's long since my rough lips touched skin delicate and tempting as thine."

"Take thy hands from her, knave!" cried Wat Tyler, angrily, advancing and seizing him firmly by the shoulder. "What were my orders, that thou durst do this act before my face?"

"I neither know nor care," replied the fellow, gruffly, striving to shake off Wat's hold, which he did not succeed in. "All I know, and mean to know is, I fought with the rest to gain admission here; and having got in, I shall consider mine whatever I lay my hands on; so take your hands from off me, old fellow, and don't interfere with me, and I shan't with you. I shall have the girl, and you shan't say me nay."

"Dog!" roared Wat, giving him a hurl that sent him staggering back, and liberated the struggling maiden from his grasp; "dost thou join the people for the sake of robbery, outrage, and marauding deeds? An' thou dost not beg for pardon, and swear never to do the like again, thou shalt be kicked from among us, and if thou darest show thy face again, thou shalt be scourged like a vile caitiff as thou art."

The fellow, who had measured his length on the floor, recovered his feet, and would have sprung at Wat, but a party of the Brenchleyites prevented him, and held him fast; his struggles to get free were in vain, and in an agony of rage he shouted to a large party of men who attended Jack Straw—

"Men of Essex, are these Kentish bullies to lord it thus over us? are we, in our efforts to be free, to become their slaves? do you mean to stand tamely by and see one of your friends and brothers served in this fashion?"

"Let him free," said Jack Straw, advancing towards him. The Brenchleyites looked at Wat, and he waved his hand in assent; they then took their hands from about him, and as soon as he was free he would have darted at our hero, but Jack Straw stopped him short, and fixing on him a stern steady gaze, beneath which he quailed, he said, coldly—

"The men of Essex obey me in all things; I presume, as you are an Essex man, you know that, do you not?"

"I do!" replied the man.

"From what part of Essex come you?"

The man hesitated, and Jack Straw repeated his question; at length, he replied reluctantly, and turned his eyes uneasily to those around him—

"Hanningfield."

"Are any here who come from Hanningfield?" inquired Jack Straw.

"I do," replied one of his followers.

"You know this man? who, and what is he?" he inquired.

"I don't know him; I never saw him until to-day—he does not come from our village."

"It's a lie," returned the fellow; "I do—my words are as good as thine."

"I know the man," replied one of the Essex-men, suddenly stepping forward and confronting him; "he was one of the 'maintainers,' and with half a dozen of his tribe broke into my cottage, and would have to his robbery inflicted the most villanous outrage as well, but for the timely arrival of some friends who are here, and can support my testimony."

"You have said enough," replied Jack Straw, and then turning to the man, he said, "you are a liar and a thief; you joined us for the worst purposes, and have been the first to set the example of insubordination and unjustifiable violence. Such men as you would speedily ruin our cause; and as you have been one who helped to add to the misery our oppressors have inflicted, by robbing those whom the state had already robbed, we shall save the legislature a little trouble, and take thy punishment into our hands. Let him be shrived," he added, addressing John Ball, "and then he shall be tossed from the walls into the moat."

The man looked aghast at this unexpected turn in affairs, for he thought Jack Straw was going to side with him: he was thunder-stricken, and for a moment he had not the power to utter a word; however, he was not very long in finding his tongue, and then said, appealingly—

"Let me go, and I'll swear to prove true and obey

orders, or quit your band and never come near you again."

"No!" replied Jack Straw, decisively; "I cannot, and do not mean, to trust you. You have earned you death along ago, it shall now be paid, and it will remind any one who attempts to follow your example, that the same fate, without mercy, awaits them. Away with him."

The man attempted to escape, but a few Essex-men, among whom was the man he had robbed, pursued him, and speedily overtook him; he was hurried to the walls, and there awaited the arrival of John Ball, ere his sentence was carried into execution.

When he had quitted the room, Jack Straw turned to his followers and said—

"Is there any here from Essex who impeaches the justice of my decree?"

"None!" was the unanimous reply, and by this time the hall, one of immense size, was thronged to excess.

"Or holds the slightest wish to disobey the orders made known to you all?"

"No, no!" they cried simultaneously.

"Then it is my command and wish, that you obey Wat Tyler in everything, even though it run counter to any I may give; I shall myself obey him to the letter of his command, and so will all true men who look forward to the success of our cause. And once more let me impress upon you all, that it is one which will not be benefited but destroyed by any petty pilferings and base outrages; we do not rise and gather together to commit the deeds of a band of robbers and assassins, but as a people who are virtuously resolved to be free. Ye, who come from villages and towns, are not in your homesteads robbers and outragers of maidens' modesty, but honest labourers, who have wives and sisters, and ye are not to act so that those high in power, those who have trampled on ye, shall sneer and say, when they hear of your deeds of violence, that ye are only fit to be kept in slavery and chains. Let those who seek to gain plunder beware—there shall not be a law which binds us together so strong as the one which shall inflict punishment upon them for robbery and violation; death without mercy shall be their fate, and let those who are unwilling to abide by this decree return to their dwellings—we can do without them, and they only endanger their heads by remaining. Have I spoken well?" he demanded, in conclusion.

A stentorian cheer replied to his question, and then the men who had infringed the order were brought before him and Wat, and were all recognised by different members of the Essex people, as belonging to the same gang as the fellow who had already been despatched to the walls; their hearing and the decision was brief; they could not deny their guilt, and were strongly bound and then hurried to the walls to share the fate of their comrade. When silence was restored, then Wat Tyler prepared to interrogate Sir Simon Burly, and his wife and daughter were presented with chairs, and treated with great respect. Wat then addressed the knight—

"Sir Simon Burly," he said, "you have brought this violence upon yourself; you might have spared yourself this visitation had you had the generosity to have believed that though a man be born humble and dependant he was not born your property as the cattle that graze in your meadows, and had the justice to have allowed your prisoner his freedom, which by law is his right; your castle would not have been stormed, nor rude hands laid upon yourself and family. You see around you a band of men made by the same God as yourself, of the same form, character, and order—who have the same feelings as yourself, who have their wives and families, whom they love as tenderly as you do your wife and child; they have the same acuteness of feeling if wrong or injury comes to them, as you would if aught evil befel you; they breathe the same air, and live on the same earth, and spring from the same parents as you; yet you lie down on your couch of luxury, and believe that they were created only for your purposes, to perform your labour, or be subjected to your villany in whatever shape you may please to inflict it; and this they have borne for centuries unresistingly, and the more tamely they submitted, the further was the oppression pushed, but the overstretched cord will break, the channel that's narrowed and narrowed to confine a mighty river, if carried to too great an excess, ends in bursting its limits and overwhelming the place around—sweeping away all before it: such has been our case. Thy order—a mere handful compared to the mass they have oppressed—have stretched the cord, have narrowed the channel, until it was unendurable, and it has overleaped its narrow bounds never to be again so circumscribed. It is not our intention, Sir Simon Burly, to commit one excess, one act of violence, but to effect a great moral revolution. Those who oppose us in our grand and beneficial design, must bear the consequences of their resistance—we have determined to be free, and we will, but our just demands shall be obtained without bloodshed, violence, or rapine; for the future you may think that men, who in the eyes of God are your brothers and equals, whatever they may be in your own—men who have been groaning under burdens heavier that they could bear, toiling incessantly, and with their toil starving and seeing their families round them dying from starvation—are not undeserving of a better condition than that in which you would have them placed, when you see them with the power in their hands, and every motive in their hearts to make terrible retaliations for their sufferings, act with moderation and stern justice, obtaining their due without proceeding to acts of slaughter and other monstrosities. Now, Sir Simon Burly, I have done; and in demanding the restoration of the unjustly imprisoned man, we seek of you, for your own sake, instantly to make us acquainted with his dungeon; and when he is safe in our possession, we will quit you, leaving everything untouched, and yourself at liberty—a grace I doubt much you would accord to us were we in your power as you are in ours. Where is your prisoner?"

Sir Simon Burly, with a gloomy face, looked upon the countenance of our hero, and then at the mass of men by whom he was surrounded; their looks of scorn and hatred seemed to cow his spirit, for he bent his head, and in a low tone said—

"If you will summon my seneschal, by name Berthold, he will lead you to the chamber in which the man is confined; he has the keys and will liberate him."

"Let the man Berthold, who is among the prisoners, be brought hither," exclaimed Wat, to some of those without, and in a few minutes a hard-featured, forbidding-looking man appeared.

"You have the keys of the dungeon?" exclaimed Wat, addressing him.

"I!" uttered the man, looking at the knight.

"So says thy master," replied Wat, eyeing him keenly. "If thou hast, and dost not instantly produce them, thou shalt be tied neck and heels, and flung from the highest tower—quick, knave! thy answer without equivocation."

The man gave a rapid glance to his master, who said, as he turned his head away—

"Yield them up, and show them to the chamber where the bondsman I seized at Gravesend is confined."

The man bowed, and instantly produced a large bunch of keys from beneath a long mantle which he wore. Wat took them, and whispered a few words to Michael, who, taking a dozen Brenchleyites with him, followed the seneschal. John Ball and Jack Straw both addressed Sir Simon Burly in turns, but failed in eliciting from him an acknowledgement that they had been driven to the extremity of rising in arms from the unjustifiable oppressions and exactions they had suffered.

In about half an hour Michael returned, with a party of the most miserable, abject looking beings imaginable—men, pale, weak, and emaciated; their bones almost through their skin; and females, whose wretched aspect excited horror and commiseration in all—the tale they had to tell was terrible. The men were mostly brothers and husbands, who would not witness their own, and wives and sisters' dishonor with silent tongues and tame indifference; and the females, those who thought death preferable to shame. The roar of indignation which went through the people as they heard the stories, and saw the weak beings all turn with eyes of disgust and loathing upon the knight, might have cowed a bolder heart than his; he turned pale as he witnessed their gleaming eyes and clenched hands ready to pounce upon him and tear him limb from limb at a look or word from their leader. One, bolder than the rest, cried—

"Hale him out! hale the villain out and off with his head!"

A hundred voices responded the cry—a hundred hands and forms leaped forward to put it into execution; but Wat Tyler sprung before him, and in a voice of thunder, shouted—

"Hold off! back all of ye: let him who values his own life stand back!"

Jack Straw also advanced and interposed his authority; the men all retired at once, and when the threatening brows and hands were removed, Wat exclaimed—

"His hour is not yet come—let him remain; the horrors of his conscience will be a greater punishment than any we can inflict, and it is as well not to have the blood of so foul a villian on our hands. Let every one quit the hall, and prepare to march to Maidstone."

The room was speedily cleared of the men, the prisoners of Sir Simon were taken with them to be sent to their different places of abode, and the great mass of men assembled in the court-yard to await the coming of their leader.

Wat Tyler was now left with Michael, Jack Straw, and John Ball, and was about to address the knight, when he was surprised by the wife of Sir Simon advancing to him, and saying—

"Your moderation and generosity to-day has emboldened me to beg of you a boon, and to pray that you will grant it."

"Name it!" replied Wat with gentleness, for he observed how she trembled.

"It is that you will lend your aid to remove myself and child far from the power of yon monstrous man," she said, pointing to her husband.

"Is this your boon?" asked Wat with surprise.

"It is," she returned. "I have lived so many years in the direst misery with him, and his conduct to my beloved child—his own daughter—has been so wicked and infamously cruel, that I gladly hail the slightest opportunity to be released from him."

"Why have you never left him before this?" inquired our hero.

"I never had the opportunity; we were always closely confined, and all his people were so completely his creatures, that any attempt to gain them to aid us would have only ended in fresh cruelties from him. Do not deny me the boon, or now we shall have more than ever to dread his conduct to us."

"Were I entirely heartless, I would say ye nay," returned Wat, pressing her hand gently; "but as I am not, your wish shall be fulfilled to your utmost desire. If you will not fear to place yourself and child in the care of one who is himself a husband and father, you shall speedily be placed in a place of safety."

"Heaven bless you for your kindness!" replied the lady, and taking her daughter by the hand she led her to his side.

"You have perhaps an attendant or two you would wish to accompany you," said Jack Straw to the lady, "and would like to take whatever apparel you may need, besides a deed of settlement, which Sir Simon will not refuse if I ask him to grant it. Pray be seated a moment," he added, and then turning to the good priest, John Ball, he said—"you have materials for writing, you will draw up a deed in which Sir Simon Burly agrees to pay his wife and child, individually and conjointly, five thousand crowns yearly, without let or hindrance; Sir Simon will sign it, and I will see to its performance. While Sir Simon is making his mark, a few trusty men can accompany the lady and her daughter to gather whatever she may need."

"I will summon them," exclaimed Wat, proceeding to the door, and calling Rubric, who instantly appeared. A few words from Wat made him retire and appear again with a dozen sturdy followers, and attend Sir Simon's wife and daughter to their apartments, to obtain whatever the lady deemed she had a right to take.

"I will see to the execution of the deed," said Jack Straw, and seating John Ball at the table, he dictated the settlement, which the priest wrote, and then Jack Straw presented it to Sir Simon, who had moodily viewed the whole of the proceedings without uttering a word.

"You will oblige me with your hand and seal to this document?" said he.

"I shall not grant it," replied the knight with cool brevity.

"I do not think you are quite prepared to meet your death," said Jack Straw with sternness; "but unless you affix your hand and seal to this, the clemency which has been shown you shall be withdrawn."

"I fear not to die," replied the knight.

"Indeed," replied Jack Straw scornfully; "that is a wonder, for you have every cause; however, you fear to do an act of justice or you would sign this. Mark me, Sir Simon Burly, you have two minute's grace, if you assent not before it expires you are a dead man; after its expiration, not even your most abject consent will save you; mine is not a vacillating temper—I do not, perhaps, decide hastily, but I abide my decision."

"Give me the paper," said the knight, with a gloominess he made no attempt to conceal, and added as he affixed his hand and seal, "it is your turn now; you have the power, and I must succumb, but my turn will come, and then I shall not forget to make quite as much of it as you have of yours."

"Your turn is to come, baron," exclaimed Jack Straw, receiving back the document; "but it will be

in the other world, and if you have your deserts, so much will be made of it, that you will be glad to make it far less if you can. This deed of settlement is now a legal document, and I will take care that it is duly recorded, and a fund set apart for its liquidation. Wat Tyler," he continued, addressing our hero, "you will oblige me by keeping Sir Simon company while I hie to the ramparts with our good friend John Ball, and see justice done to the culprit who is there expecting his fate; come, good priest, thy services will be needful, for I doubt not there is a long catalogue of crimes and villany waiting thine ear."

So, taking the good priest's arm, he quitted the room. As soon as he had gone, Michael approached Wat Tyler, thoughtfully, and said, hesitatingly, in a low tone of voice—

"I fancy I remember who our friend Jack Straw is."

"Who?" replied Wat, hastily.

"I may be deceived," returned Michael; "but there was a certain flash of his eye, and a curl of his lip, which brings one forcibly to my memory, who, if it be he, owes me at least no good will."

"Ha!" exclaimed Wat, "who can it be standing thus affected towards thee?"

"You are less likely to remember than I," answered Michael, with a laugh, "having less cause. If Jack Straw is not that same Rupert, the son of the Earl of Tonbridge, with whom I fought at Cadsant, then I know not who he can be."

Wat started as Michael mentioned his name, and mused for a few minutes; then he said—

"Although so many years have elapsed since I saw him, yet his features are not lost to my memory, and I can trace a resemblance to them in those of Jack Straw. But what strange vicissitudes can have turned him from a haughty noble, who looked upon his serfs as beings born slaves to his will, to a a leader and asserter of their rights."

"That is a question he best can solve," returned Michael. "All I can say in reply to it is, that after our contest, I never saw him until now; and all I ever heard of him was, that he continued for a short time in the army, then quitted it and returned to England; he remained in London a few years, and then he was lost sight of; it was thought he was secretly murdered. The earldom became extinct, because there were no heirs; and now, all of a sudden, he pops into life as Jack Straw, the leader of the very men he scouted and despised."

"We have yet to be satisfied that Jack Straw is Rupert, Earl of Tonbridge," exclaimed Wat. "I acknowledge the resemblance in the persons, but it does not, therefore, follow that they should be one and the same man. However, it is a question which can be soon decided, and I will at once settle it."

He called a party of men to the room, and bidding them guard Sir Simon Burly, he quitted it, and made for the ramparts, accompanied by Michael. As they reached them, they heard the voice of the ruffian whom Jack Straw had doomed to death, supplicating for mercy in the most piteous manner, but with evident ill-success, for a deaf ear was turned to his entreaties, and preparations were being made to seize him and throw him into the moat, a fearful distance for his chance of life; and he seemed quite conscious of it, for he screamed, prayed, yelled, and committed a thousand extravagant gesticulations. In the midst of his frenzy, his eye lighted on Wat Tyler advancing, and he would have bounded towards him, but he was too firmly held by those who were about to inflict his punishment upon him; he struggled and kicked, but he could not escape. Immediately Wat reached him, he roared out—

"Save my life! have mercy upon me! you have the power. By the God you love and serve! save me—I dare not die; I have murders on my conscience as thick as hairs—spare me! let me have some chance to redeem my soul; do not let me be cast into Hell without a hope of redemption. Have mercy upon me! you can save me—you can; he said he would obey your nod," he cried, pointing to Jack Straw, "and as you hope to be saved hereafter, have mercy on me!"

"You deserve it not," exclaimed Wat.

"No," replied Jack Straw, "he never shewed any mercy to others, why should it be extended to him?"

"Heed him not," shrieked the robber; "do not let me die yet; I will be penitent if you spare me; I will pray every hour of my future life to God, and in all things endeavour to atone for my villany. Have mercy! you expect it from God—grant it then to me! do not plunge my soul into utter damnation."

Moved by his miserable words and entreaties, Wat turned to Jack Straw, and said—

"Let him depart."

"It is mistaken leniency," replied Jack Straw, "he will be as great a villain as ever if he is set at liberty."

"I will not!—I will not! I swear by all that is sacred!" yelled the man.

"He will mix among the men again, and incite them to deeds of plunder and insubordination, which will bid fair to ruin our cause."

"No! no!" cried the fellow, "only let me go, you shall never set eyes upon me more. I will enter a monastery, and dedicate myself to Heaven."

"I am afraid your promises of amendment will be little remembered when you are at liberty again," said Wat to him; "however, you shall not say the entire destruction of your soul rested with me; you shall have your liberty."

"God shower every blessing on you!" cried the fellow.

"But," continued Wat, "if you ever show your face among the people, or are caught by any of them in any lawless act, nothing shall again step between you and death. Unbind and set him free," he added to the men who held him. He was instantly obeyed; and the man, as soon as he found himself released, darted off at the top of his speed, as though he was afraid Wat would alter his mind, and consign him to death. Jack Straw looked after him with a contemptuous laugh, and then said to the men—

"Follow him, and see that he has his liberty; he will else be stopped, and in all probability realise the fate he is scampering from."

Michael at the same moment whispered to Wat—

"It is Rupert! I'll swear to that scornful curl of his lip."

Wat nodded affirmatively; and then laying his hand upon Jack Straw's shoulder, he said to him—

"You have told me that we have met before, and that if I failed in discovering you, you would yourself make me acquainted with your name."

"You speak truly," exclaimed Jack Straw.

"What if, through the aid of my friend Michael, I had discovered who thou art?" observed Wat.

"Michael!" replied Jack Straw, quickly; "Michael! is he the same Michael Rycheart who accompanied thee to the wars?"

"It is," replied Wat.

A strong flush run across Jack Straw's brow, but with an effort he dismissed it, and with a melancholy smile he exclaimed—

"Then I wonder not you should, through the aid of his memory, discover me."

"You are Rupert, Earl of Tonbridge," said Wat.

"Such was once my name and title," he replied, heaving a sigh; "but is so no longer, and thy friend was the cause of my being what I am."

"I!" iterated Michael, with surprise.

"Aye, even thee," returned Rupert, whom we shall still designate by his familiar title of Jack Straw.

"How mean you?" he asked.

"Listen," replied Jack Straw: "when I entered the army I was, like yourselves, young, aspiring, full of proud hopes, and high enthusiasm. I looked forward to reap glory as plentiful as the reaper gathers corn with his sickle. I saw, in the bright and vivid imaginings of romantic youth, myself placed at the head of all knights and knight-errants, the flower and glory of their order. I pictured to myself a time when opportunities and my own courage and perseverance would elevate me in the eyes and esteem of the highest and bravest: with such over-colored fancy, heightened by all I had heard of the chivalric achievements of Sir Walter Manny, and other gallant knights, and by my own small share in the skirmish with the robbers at Brenchley, I joined the army—in so much like unto yourselves—but there the resemblance ends; for I was proud and vain, haughty, arrogant, overbearing, and hotly impatient. I was the only son of a poor earl, but fancied myself the son of a king; the miserable system of society had in my own little circle made me a tyrant. As a boy, I had found the serfs and vassals little else than my foot-balls; and, albeit my father endeavoured to instil different principles into me, I found them such, treated them, and thought of them as such. You may imagine the terrible emotions of rage—of wounded vanity and pride, I endured, when, on leading my followers to the Earl of Derby, I discovered that, instead of being looked on with eyes of envy and admiration, that I and my men were laughing-stocks. I felt the blood rush through my veins boiling hot; I could feel my face one hue of intense scarlet, and my fingers tingled; I was stung to a degree it is impossible to describe. Those only who are excessively vain, and have felt what it is to suffer, when they have expected to make a great sensation of surprise and admiration, the pain of finding themselves the jeer and scorn of all, can tell what I felt at that moment, and it had the effect of afterwards making me mean and contemptible. Before this event occurred, with all my pride and haughtiness, I would not have descended to a meanness; but now I found that those who had laughed at me and held me up to ridicule, were higher in all things—birth, rank, position, fame—than myself, and possessing more influence in every way, could make of me, and treat me as I treated my own vassals. This discovery was the more galling to me, as I never contemplated meeting any so placed—but I did; and the first wound to my pride was the downfall of the first barrier of my honor.

"I could not endure to be the ridicule of these nobles, and I descended to flatter them. I endeavored to make myself agreeable to them—to tell lies even to make them smile, and deem me a good companion. I ran on, scarce heeding what I said, until brought to my recollection by Michael's sudden, angry, but just interruption. Here was a second, but more bitter wound to my pride. I was still an earl's son, although beneath many with whom I associated, and as such conceived myself immeasurably above thy friend, and really laughed with scorn when he vowed I should unsay my assertions, or prove them with my sword. The issue of that quarrel went against me; I was compelled to put my dignity aside, fight with a peasant as an equal, and, in the contest, was defeated. No miserable wretch was ever more miserably eaten up with mortification and humbled spirit than I, when on recovering from the effects of my overthrow, I understood the position in which I was placed from my cousin Ulric, who did not spare me in his recital of what had occurred, which, by my desire, he had given me. I recovered—I resumed my post in the army, but quickly found myself received with coldness and with careless indifference. Susceptible and sensitive to a degree in my nature, I could not brook this behaviour, and I fought several duels; I was only successful in one, and, after every defeat, was treated more coolly than ever. They could not deny in the field I equalled the bravest of them, for I courted death in every shape. I was reckless of every hazard; for stung to madness by their low estimate of me, I determined to tear from them an acknowledgment of my courage. There was not a point, however daring and dangerous to attack, I did not seek to obtain the command to assault. I exposed myself everywhere; I fought like a tiger, and, in several instances, humbly I say it, but truly, my personal exertions turned the success of the day in our favor: acknowledgments to this effect were never denied me; I have been publicly complimented for my prowess and services, but in private the hand and eye of friendship were denied me. I was kept aloof, held off—few conversed with me, and those who did, kept up their conversation briefly, as though afraid to be seen talking with me: the Lord Beauchamp was the principal cause of all this; he would never speak to me save to deliver orders—and he was such a model for imitation in the army, that every one was glad to follow his example. Finding that all my efforts to conciliate were vain—that all my exertions in the field met only cold applause, and benefited my station nothing—I resolved in disgust to quit the army, and then discovered that there were hearts who could appreciate me among an order I had despised, while I was treated contumeliously by those I had little less than worshipped.

"In endeavoring, by my actions in the field, to regain the esteem I had lost in the opinions of the nobles, I had paid great attention to my followers; moved also strongly by the recollection of the ridicule which those I had brought with me from Kent had once incurred, I improved their condition in all things; their equipments equalled the best in the service; their rations were of the first description; their duties so regulated, that none bore any portion heavier than another, nor would I permit any unjust favor or partiality to be displayed to any one of their number. Every acknowledgment was made for any individual gallantry and good action, and a reward bestowed beside; and one detected in a base act was instantly expelled, nor suffered ever to re-enter—a punishment far greater than any bodily one I could have inflicted. Thus I possessed one of the best regiments in the portion of the army with which I served; they were much respected and highly spoken of, and notwithstanding the cool odour in which I was held among the nobles, it was deemed by the soldiery an honor to belong to my company; and thus, if a service, however difficult to perform, could be executed, I had the men who could accomplish it. When I grew disgusted with the treatment I had experienced, and determined to quit the army, I applied for my discharge, which was granted me with a readiness I even now remember with feelings of extreme mortification and bitterness; and I then prepared to take leave of my followers; and then I

found I had, unconsciously, won their love and admiration. The grief they displayed on the announcement of my intention affected me deeply, and their exhortations and entreaties to remain with them, almost prevailed upon me to consent; but I remembered the cold contempt of the nobles, and my heart was steeled to their wish. I refused firmly, but gave my denial in such terms that they might understand I regretted considerably to part with them, but was glad to be away from men by whom I was unjustly treated. The men separated with every appearance of much grief, and shortly afterwards sent a deputation to me to apply for their discharge also, for fear a leader should be placed over them whom they should not like. To this I gladly consented, and made the application: this favor was also as readily granted as my own discharge had been, and I gathered that jealousy of the good conduct and appearance of the troop was the inducement. No matter, I expended all the prizes and pay I had obtained in gifts to my followers, and we parted. I may say I was literally loaded with their blessings, and they with my best feelings; for they were the first and only body of men who had treated me and thought of me with kindness and affection.

"I came to London. I was received at court, and, for a time, was here well treated. I began to recover some of the old feelings which had been crushed and kept down. Once more I fancied myself a puissant noble, and believed that others esteemed me so too, and this delusion I was for some time permitted to remain, when, as if he were some demon come to blast my sight and wither my best feelings, the Lord Lewis Beauchamp came to London, and with him a train of those who had so slighted me when in the army. You may judge my feelings when I began to discover friends grow cold, warm hands withheld, and eyes that had looked kindly and friendly averted from me as though I had been a murderer or some base execrable villain. Oh, God! my heart and brain were scorched. Wherever I turned, those who had recently warmly greeted me scarcely nodded, and hurried by me as if I were infectious. At last I swore to endure it no longer. I contrived, by a stratagem, to get all those who had recently been my friends, to meet with those who had returned from the wars, at one time, in one place. When they were all assembled, I appeared in the midst of them. I remember how proudly I threw up my head as I confronted them, and walking close to the Lord Lewis Beauchamp, asked him if, in any action with the enemy, I had ever proved myself a dastard or a coward. He answered 'No.' I then inquired whether, as a soldier in the field, I had ever done aught to stigmatise the character of a knight, or betrayed the honor of my country; he again replied in the negative. I asked him if I had not, after every action in which I had fought, received the compliments of himself and colleagues for the services I and my troop had performed; he said 'I had.' I then turned triumphantly to my friends, and found eyes and tongues were resuming their old character; there were many ladies there, and I was anxious in their eyes to be cleared from any base calumny. My heart leaped to find I was regaining my seat in their hearts; and I once more turned to the Lord Lewis, saying—

"'Until the arrival of yourself and friends, my lord, I was esteemed and honored; but after your coming, my friends receded from me as though I were some vile thing, poisonous to the touch, proving to me that you, or your friends, had uttered some unfounded and base aspersions against me. Now, my lord, as thou'rt a man of honor, and art famed for being such, I command thee to either utter to my face the charge, or entirely deny it.'

"'I was surprised at seeing thee here, I must confess,' he exclaimed, coolly, 'and expressed as much; and upon being asked the reason, I replied that thou wert a base slanderer and liar, and had refused, until compelled, to give the man thou hadst wronged satisfaction, pluming thyself upon being heir to a beggarly earldom of no standing.'

"My rage at hearing these words was excessive; I felt almost frantic; I shouted rather than said, 'He is a liar who says thus much; and a contemptible coward and scoundrel if he will not support his words with his sword!'

"My own leaped from my scabbard at the same instant, and the Lord Lewis Beauchamp, with his icy smile, threw down his glove. Twenty or thirty others followed, and in the excess of my passion, I rushed to make an attack upon all; but my cousin Ulric, who, with my dear, sweet sister Agnes, attended to witness my exculpation, sprung forward, and seizing me with a strong arm, held me back, and whispered hastily—

"'For God's sake, Rupert, be calm, or you will sacrifice your honor entirely.'

"I obeyed him, and he advanced to my Lord Lewis, and said proudly—aye, I could have hugged him, he said it so loftily and haughtily—

"'My Lord Lewis Beauchamp has commenced entertaining a new doctrine in estimating a man's value by his wealth; my memory is not so treacherous, but it reminds me of a time when he averred that "a title's but an honorable distinction, whose advantages you forfeit when you disgrace it by a foul deed." The earldom of Tonbridge may be a beggarly one when compared in possession of gold and lands with that of the Lord Lewis Beauchamp; but it is not one tittle less honorable: the title was granted for great services done on the field of battle, while that of the Lord Lewis Beauchamp was conferred for God knows what. Whatever it may have been, it is no less beggarly in honor than the earldom of Tonbridge, and the contemptuous remark which the Lord Lewis Beauchamp finds it necessary to use to strengthen his assertion respecting my cousin's character, is far removed from the high pinnacle of virtuous honor upon which my lord has pinned his escutcheon, and is no less unmanly than untrue.'

"And my bold cousin flung his glove in his face. Oh, how I chuckled in my heart as I saw the deadly expression, the ghastly white, spread itself over the usually immoveable features of the proud noble; he, however, was possessed of the greatest self-command, and he controlled the anger which, but for the most powerful exertions, would have burst forth. He picked up Ulric's gauntlet, and placed it in his belt, and then said, in a cold calm tone that made me almost mad to be compelled to listen—

"'I was hasty in using the expression respecting the earldom of Tonbridge, for which I beg the most unqualified pardon; but as you have used language to me I would not even tolerate from my sovereign, I accept thy challenge, and thou shalt hear further from me.'

"I sprung forward again, and confronted him.

"'You will answer to me first,' I cried; 'your insult and your lie was first directed to me.' The haughty noble bowed. 'And here I again add,' I exclaimed, turning to those by whom he was surrounded, 'that all who repeat this noble's words respecting me are equally liars, and I dare them to support their words with their best courage.'

"The gloves lay untouched, and I, taking example by my cousin and Lord Lewis, affected a calmness I was far from feeling, picked them up, knowing easily the wearers by the arms embroidered upon them. The noble and his friends quitted the apartment, and most of my friends crowded round me with professions of restored esteem; but I could trace, or fancied so, a want of the cordiality they had originally borne me, save in my sister and Ulric. Agnes hung upon me, and with tears besought me not to heed the aspersions, and not hazard my life in meeting my aspersers with my sword; but I bade her not fear for me. I would either, I swore, cut my way to a clean name, or wash out the stain with my blood. It is useless to detail the whole of the occurrences as they occurred, for I should but tire your patience; I have only been minute thus far, that you might understand perfectly why you see in Rupert, Earl of Tonbridge, Jack Straw, the leader of the people. I met my foes one by one. I had sworn a fearful oath never to yield to one—that he who conquered should slay me. As if fortune determined to repay me for all her slights, she gave me the victory over every opponent. The Lord Lewis Beauchamp I fought three several times; each time I was his conqueror, and he at length, to save his life, publicly acknowledged me to be undeserving of the imputation he had cast upon me. Thrice, also, I defeated Lord William Beauclerk. He was not quite so honorable as Lord Lewis; he acknowledged to having spoken unadvisedly, but set some of his myrmidons on to slay me, and report that I had been killed in a drunken brawl. In this he was disappointed; single-handed I stood against four ruffians: I slew two of them, the third fled, and I captured the fourth. I appeared before the judges with him; the man confessed who was his employer, and he was punished. Lord Beauclerk stood too high to be touched by the law, but the public voice was loud in my favour, and once again I was welcomed among my friends as of old; but those I had chastised never ceased working against me, and endeavouring to blast my reputation. I was charged with thousands of offences I never committed. Scoundrels were hired to carry off maidens—my calumniators rescued them according to deep-laid plans. The villains said I had hired them, and I had frequently lovers and brothers to fight for deeds I never dreamed of committing. I was several times waylaid and assaulted, but my good heart and strength of arm brought me safely through. Once, when surrounded by a dozen ruffians, and my fate appeared inevitable, I was rescued by a party of men who had belonged to my troop, but were now engaged in the cultivation of land; they were overjoyed at having saved my life, and I could not but be much struck with the affectionate earnestness of these humble but honest men. I compared their behaviour to that of those I had been in the habit of mixing with, and began to conceive I had made a grand mistake in believing them so immeasurably inferior and unworthy any consideration. A sudden thought entered my head that I would go amongst them and endeavour to learn more of their characters, their habits, natures, and positions, and upon the instant accepted the invitation of one of the men to visit him. I accompanied him to his dwelling, at Fobbing, near Brentwood, in Essex, keeping my name and rank carefully secret, suffering him on no account to disclose it, even to his family, which consisted of an amiable wife and two very lovely daughters, the eldest of whom I married."

"Married!" echoed both Wat and Michael.

"Yes," he replied; "my father and mother were both dead; Ulric and Agnes, with a blooming family, lived at Tonbridge Castle, and I had nought in the wide world to care for me, or any but my sister and cousin to care for; my title had only brought me vexation, trouble, and unhappiness; and I was here in the bosom of a family who loved me, and I knew that it was reported in London that I had been murdered. I had no desire to alter my situation, for I had no desire to renew my troubles and vexations; and I found the gentle girl whom I made my wife loved me, ere she was herself conscious to what extent her heart was set upon me; I therefore made her my wife. I had not long been married, when a justice—at least a wretch who wore the robes, but not the real attributes of justice—one Thomas de Bampton—"

"I have heard him mentioned with no loving tongue," exclaimed Wat.

"No, nor could you e'er see him looked upon with a loving eye," continued Jack Straw. "Well, this ruffian, for he is no less, cast a lustful eye upon the sister of my wife, and coolly requested her, upon pain of her own death and father's utter destruction, to comply with his infamous proposals; she spurned him with scorn and loathing, and he retired to his home to put his threat into execution. I was made acquainted by my wife of this affair; and taking with me a thick cudgel, I went up to his dwelling, and was ushered into his room. I requested to see him alone, which, with some difficulty, and hinting that it would be considerably to his benefit to comply with my wish, he consented to. As soon as the last servant had quitted, I jumped up, and fastened the door firmly. I then threw myself upon him, and gagged him closely, and when I had done this, I took my cudgel up, and castigated him with all my strength until I was exhausted, and he was all but a jelly. I then ceased, and disclosing my name and rank, bade him, as he valued his life and possessions, never to disclose either, or take one step in revenge. He promised, in a voice barely articulate, and I returned home. I found that his conduct was common to all men in power, and soon I began to be ashamed that I had ever belonged to the order of the nobility, for it was so shamefully perverted from what it ought to be. I began to see the frightful state to which those who had produced everything had been brought, and that this was against all human nature. I hesitated not to express my opinions to all around me, and those who had suffered were open-eared to all I said, and ready to undertake anything I chose to propose for the bettering of their condition; but the time was not yet come. I employed my time, therefore, in spreading my doctrine, until Essex was without a serf or vassal who was not of my opinion.

"This Thomas de Bampton, universally hated, seemed trying his best to induce the people to rise up with one accord to hang him. There was no impost to be levied, no oppression executed, but he did not gladly perform it, and was execrated accordingly; with me he had outwardly kept his promise, but covertly did his utmost to crush my wife's family. Misfortune had overtaken them—or rather the burdens heaped upon them were too heavy to bear, and they gradually sunk under them. Murrain seized the cattle, and tax-gatherers took everything else. Agnes and Ulric believed me dead, and were in possession of my estates; my stock of money was nearly all expended, and I believed there was nothing left me but to disclose the fact of my existence to my sister, and get a supply of money, for I was, with the family, reduced to considerable poverty, and experienced all the hardships which the poor suffer. But I was spared this necessity, for Thomas de

Bampton, finding his success complete in bringing the family to beggary, once more renewed his diabolical overtures to my sister-in-law; and once more I visited him with my cudgel, and not only trounced him again so severely that he could not turn on his bed for weeks, but compelled him, to prevent the consequence of a disclosure of his rascality to the people in such a manner, that they should rise and tear him to pieces, to restore to my wife's family all he had taken from them, and a handsome sum likewise, as a compensation for the villany he had contemplated. Although our condition was bettered—for he found he was assaulting an enemy that cut his fingers, and never attempted to molest us more—he inflicted every base oppression he could on the people; and, upon the introduction of this infamous poll-tax, he was in high glee at his chance of adding more misery on the already most miserable people. He was made one of the commissioners by the Flemish and Lombard contractors, and dealt out his decrees with an iron hand. I advised the people of Fobbing not to pay, and they were summoned before this scoundrel to be compelled; I appeared at the head of them, and told him we had resolved not to pay one penny more than we had done, and—but the matter was too serious for mirth—it was laughable to see the frantic gestures of rage he went through, vowing we should all be hung up as an example to the country, and set his men-at-arms upon us. Ha! ha! then came a time! We turned upon the dogs and scattered them, like feathers in the wind, before us. Thomas de Bampton with great difficulty, and through my exertions, escaped, for which the scoundrel made to London, and I was the first he denounced; but I having been so long believed to be dead, they thought his head was affected by the alarm he had undergone. However, Sir Robert Belknape, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was sent down to try us, accompanied by a long train of jurors—villains who had pre-determined to hang us—and a quantity of grasping clerks of the commission, but they found us too formidable for them. The Chief Justice fled in a paroxysm of horrible fear; and the jurors and clerks, who had conducted themselves in the most arrogant, overbearing manner, were seized and decapitated, their heads stuck upon poles, and, bearing them through all the villages and townships, we incited the people to join us, which they everywhere did, and our first attack was upon the mansion of Sir Robert Hales, who is the new Lord Treasurer of England. I know the villain well; he has made an enormous fortune out of the poor, and his house we found filled with the greatest wealth, but we took nothing but a little wine and all the provisions we could find, and then burnt the house down and all it contained; and now I found something must be done, for the country was ripe for a revolt, and we had risen and gone too far to retreat; we must keep on, or perish for our deed. I racked my brain for a man to lead us, and one who might bring the people of a county with him. I thought of you suddenly, and remembered hearing Sir Walter Manny speak of the universal esteem entertained for you in Brenchley. You, then, were the man for the purpose. I hastened to Brenchley; you had quitted it some years for Dartford; I immediately made for it, and arrived just as you had done justice upon the vile ruffian who had insulted your child. The rest you know; and now you may well understand why I am in the position in which you see me, and why I prefer to be one of the people to being one of an order which, noble in itself, is disgraced by those who should adorn it."

"Your story is a singular one," said Wat, "and shows strongly how a man may suffer from his first error in life. You have been more sinned against than sinning, and have paid the full penalty of your error in the pain and anxiety which it caused you. I hope most sincerely, however, that after so long a lapse of years you do not feel angered with Michael, who—"

"Acted nobly," interupted Jack Straw; "acted as he should have done, had I been King Edward himself. No; I feel no ill-will towards him," he added, extending his hand to him, which Michael grasped warmly; "I have often thought with pride and pleasure, since I have been one of the people, that thy act, Michael, was that of a peasant and worthy of the noblest in the land; it was not the least thing in my rememberance when I resolved to see whether the people were really the senseless clods, the brutes, I had always believed them to be. I hope the pretty maiden whom I shamefully aspersed was in no way the sufferer from my base slander, which I, however, had the grace to acknowledge to be false."

"She is my wife," replied Michael. "I made her so on my return to England, and," he added with much fervor, "a better, sweeter, truer, more affectionate wife could not exist on the face of the earth."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Jack Straw; "it has always been a painful reflection to me that I might have caused both you and her much misery and unhappiness; your words relieve me of, at least, that sin. But come, let us to the people; they are looking anxiously for us, and it is necessary to be much with them, to make them obey orders. What is your next step?"

"Maidstone," exclaimed Wat; "we will from thence to Canterbury; and then, when our men are recruited, march into the stronghold of our oppressors, and compel them to grant us justice."

"Amen!" cried Jack Straw, Michael, and John Ball, who had stood a silent party in the conference.

They all then descended to the hall, which contained Sir Simon Burly, and there found his wife and child waiting their presence, with all the moveables they deemed necessary to convey with them. Wat Tyler advanced to the knight, and said—

"Sir Simon, you may esteem yourself fortunate in being thus leniently dealt with. I fear that all who have oppressed the people will not meet with your good fortune. We are about to depart, and we take with us nothing but those who were thy prisoners, thy wife and daughter, who have most earnestly requested to be emancipated from thy thraldom, and such goods as they require, and which none but themselves will touch. You may be thankful for our mercy, and learn from our acts to thee to be merciful to others when they are in thy power."

"Not he," said Jack Straw, "he is too old to learn; he is one of your smooth-faced society's good men. He would have cajoled us, but he believed an affected roughness would plead best for him; it has not, nor will it. This man smiled and fawned himself into the good graces of Edward, and of the Black Prince also, and to be the guardian of our beloved monarch, Richard; so you may trace from whose hands the burdens of the people are showered. If I had my will, he should be suspended from the flag-staff upon the castle keep; but your word is law, and so let him live, but do not waste words upon him."

Wat smiled, and followed his advice; he then departed for the court-yard, accompanied by the lady, her daughter, and his friends; he gave his orders to his men with clearness and precision, and they obeyed them with a readiness and order which would have

done credit to a disciplined troop. They filed out of the court-yard and marched towards the road leading back to Maidstone. Wat took up his station at the head of the Kentish men, as Jack Straw returned to his at the head of the men of Essex; and when everything was prepared for them, the word was given to move forward, and they uttered a stentorian cheer as they quitted the castle and began their march, carrying their prisoners with them until they reached Maidstone, and then it was their intention to suffer them to depart wherever they pleased. Merrily they marched along through the dust and under a scorching sun, but without heeding it; for they had taken the first step towards the accomplishment of their freedom. It had proved successful, and they deemed it a good omen. On they marched gleefully, and in a short time they gained Maidstone.

CHAPTER XII.

"On the Monday after Trinity Sunday, 1381, Wat Tyler entered Canterbury. * * * * *

On his march recruits came to him from all quarters of Kent and Sussex, and by the time he reached Blackheath (11th June), there were, it is said, one hundred thousand desperate men obeying the orders of Wat Tyler. While at this spot, the widow of the Black Prince, the young king's mother, fell into their hands, but in the midst of their fury they respected her, and after granting a few kisses to some dirty-faced, rough-bearded men, she was allowed, with her retinue and maids of honor, to proceed quietly to London, the leaders even engaging to protect her and her son."

PICT. HIST. ENGLAND.

"When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then a gentleman?"
JOHN BALL'S ADDRESS TO THE "COMMONS."

"The fame of these doings spread into Sussex, Hertford, Essex, and Cambridgeshire, Norfolke, Suffolke, &c., and when such assembling of ye common people daily took increase, and yt their number was almost infinite, so that they feared no man to resist them, they began to show some such acts as they had considered in their minds."

STOW'S ANNALS.

THE whole of the prisoners of Sir Simon Burly, whom they had rescued, were fed and re-clothed when they arrived at Maidstone, and were then suffered to do as they pleased—either to join the people or return to their homes; most of them preferred the latter, but those who did, expressed their intention of speedily returning, and join them in their efforts to obtain freedom. Maidstone, at that time, was a miserable little township, but whatever it afforded was at the service of the people, and nothing whatever was taken but it was paid for at a just price. After staying a short time to recruit themselves, the order was again given for them to set forth, which was obeyed, and they passed out of the town on their way to Canterbury, and from thence purposed going to Blackheath, where it was proposed they should rendezvous until they were quite ready to enter London. Through woods and fields they passed, and as they wound over the Downs, it was a rare sight to see the long line; here they extended over the hills; there they stretched like an enormous chain over the sloping heights, and might be seen by one who stood upon one of the hills covering the brow of the one they were passing, those quite in advance lost to sight in their descent on the other side, and those within view reaching from that brow down into the vale, up the hill on which the spectator stood, down into the next vale, into which they were pouring in dense numbers down the slope that formed it, covering the whole space as far as the eye could reach on either side, while the tops of pikes, and the heads of every variety of weapon, showed there were hundreds, nay thousands more flocking up in the rear.

Wat Tyler had been accommodated with a horse at Gravesend, and as they passed over the hills, he occasionally drew up to converse with those in the rear, and then would gallop forward to cheer those in the van. As he galloped to and fro there was a style and manner with him which quite justified Jack Straw's opinion of his possessing all the requisites of a leader; the same commanding air with which he sat his horse when a youth was still his, and his eye retained its fire, his words their tone of enthusiasm, and infused an ardor into the bosoms of the men they could not have believed it in the power of a man to have done. He praised the alert and active—he cheered the flagging and strengthened the wavering—he gave them every direction respecting their marching, and made arrangements calculated to save them fatigue, rendering himself quite as popular as Jack Straw had anticipated.

Their march was a desultory one, but they had a strong motive for it. At that period Canterbury was the most influential town in Kent, contained a large number of inhabitants, and if it were generally known throughout the county that the people of this town had risen with the insurgents, it would have a considerable influence upon the more respectable portion of the people who still held back. The Archbishop, too, was here, and as he had been a great oppressor, had endeavored to keep the people down, while he rioted in luxury upon the proceeds of their labor, and had imprisoned John Ball three several times for his freedom of speech to the serfs, vassals, and other "villeins" of the county, they resolved to make him prisoner, and read him a few lessons that he stood much in need of.

It was in the year 1381, upon the day after Trinity Sunday, that Wat Tyler, at the head of "the true and lawful commons of England," as they styled themselves, entered Canterbury; they proceeded direct to the Cathedral, and entered without opposition. The monks and the clergy were horribly terrified, but were not molested; and as the Archbishop had escaped, they left the place, and for the remainder of the day took up their abode quietly in the city. On the following day they received a deputation, consisting of the mayor and aldermen, who were so uncommonly obsequious to the "greasy rogues," that it might have been imagined they were waiting upon the ambassadors of a powerful kingdom. Wat Tyler briefly acquainted them with the purport of their rising, and demanded to know whether they were friendly to the cause or not. The mayor and his council, affecting great sweetness of manner, replied that they were particularly friendly, uncommonly so, and begged to enrol themselves as honorary members, but not exactly active ones. They wished to know if the leaders would accompany them home to dinner, and would have probably displayed their abject servility to a much greater extent if Wat had not sternly cut them short. He asked them if they were ready to take an oath, to be true to Richard and the "true commons," and they assented with great readiness.

It was administered to them, and then made publicly known. It had the effect of instantly bringing forward a vast number of the tardy, who waited for the example of their betters before they acted, and before night nearly the whole of the populace were ready to enlist under the banners of the true commons.

There were three men who were immensely rich, who were in very bad odour, having made themselves wealthy by notorious infamy of conduct. They had plundered and oppressed all their lives; they had caused intense misery to hundreds of poor people; they had inflicted injuries upon injuries; they had wronged, extorted, oppressed their fellow-citizens in every way; they were, with their enormous wealth, great misers; they had every man's curse, and no man's blessing; and the present opportunity was taken by the Canterbury people to "hale them out and off with their heads," but their possessions, ill-gotten as they were, were respected, and their families unmolested; they only were punished, and that before Wat knew of it, or he would have prevented it.

Having obtained the purpose for which they had visited Canterbury, they departed, and in their company went the greater proportion of its inhabitants. They made for Blackheath, which, on the eleventh of June, they reached. Upon this extensive heath Wat planted his standard, and there took up his quarters for the purpose of collecting his men in proper order, form them into divisions, placing with each a leader on whom he could depend, and to make them acquainted with such discipline as he knew was needful to preserve them together, and prevent their straggling in disorder, breaking into confusion, and so be made an easy prey to even a small body of well-regulated troops. It was astonishing to see the numbers that hourly flocked to join his cause; fresh men from all the counties around, that learned of the uprising, poured in hundreds to swell their numbers, and take part in the great movement for universal freedom. While they were remaining here and making every preparation for their departure for London, Wat, in riding one day with Jack Straw and Michael to review the men, see to their wants, and exhort them to moderation in their future deeds, observed a commotion on the main road, and numbers flocking towards it; he clapped spurs to his horse, and, followed by his friends, hastened to the spot. Immediately he arrived there the men fell back, and a lane was made for him, through which he passed, and found there was a handsomely ornamented car, accompanied by a numerous train of servants, who were struggling in the hands of a party of the commons, who were endeavoring to drag them towards Wat Tyler's tent, while in the car was seated a lady surrounded by a number of rough fellows, who were laughing and waiting in turns to receive a kiss from the lady, who looked as pale as death, but preserved her dignity, and yielded the demanded salute with a courtesy which, though gentle and graceful, could not keep hid the terror she suffered. Wat frowned and clenched his teeth as he witnessed this, and cried in a stern, bitter voice—

"What means this wilful, direct disobedience of orders? Have your miseries made ye so tired of your lives, ye wish your companions to hang ye up like dogs? Fall back, every man of you! What, do you seek amelioration of wrongs and shameful oppressions by inflicting them? For shame! Is a harmless woman a subject to exercise your valor upon? Do you desire to show how worthy ye are to be free, to be unoppressed, to be held as brethren by those above ye in wealth, by doing wrong to every helpless female ye meet? By Heaven! if I thought such as thee formed the largest portion of the true commons, I would join the troops of the tyrants, and lend my aid to mow ye down. Away! ye are no true men, and shall not disgrace our community by belonging to it."

"Forgive us!" cried one of the men, hastily, "we were wrong; punish us, but do not expel us. We have been so accustomed to be trampled under foot, that it is hard, when the opportunity occurs, not to retaliate. We would not have harmed the lady beyond taking a few simple kisses; and if she had refused them we would not have taken them by force."

"No!" exclaimed Wat, angrily. "If ye had, the best among ye should have died a cur's death, and but that I know ye have been hardly used, and therefore need much self-control to keep your hands from those who have done ye so much wrong, you would not lightly have escaped for this dereliction of orders. Away with ye; let me see no more such conduct, for if I do, you may escape with life, but not without evidences of your misconduct."

The men uttered their thanks, and moved away abashed, while the remainder crowded round him, ready to obey his slightest nod, and to show, by their diligence in executing his orders, that they were worthy his approbation. He advanced to the car, and dismounting, approached the lady respectfully.

"Fair lady," he exclaimed, "I regret that you have been roughly handled by men, who are rude but honest; the injuries which they have so long endured have made them less courteous than they should have been; but as it has been the custom to keep them sunk in a state of barbarism and ignorance, when they have been used to see their wives, their daughters, their betrothed, torn by violence from them without a hope of redress, it is not to be expected they will show that kindness and consideration to those who fall in their power, which has ever been denied to them. I have much influence over them, and as far as my power extends I will endeavor to prevent any such outbreaks; but those who have inflicted the bitterest wrongs must not be surprised to be retaliated upon with the same severity with which they committed their own deeds. You shall not be further harmed; but may I inquire your name and purpose in crossing this heath?"

"I am Joan, Countess of Kent," she replied.

"Whom men justly call 'The Fair Maid of Kent,'" said Wat, gallantly. The Countess bowed her head; and he continued,—"The wife of our lamented Prince Edward, and mother to his Majesty Richard the Second, whom God preserve!"

Again the Countess bowed her head, and Wat appeared thoughtful for a moment; he then inquired, "You had a purpose in crossing this heath while it was covered with so vast an assemblage of people?"

"I am returning from a pilgrimage to Canterbury," she replied. "It would be false to deny that I knew not ye were thus assembled here, for the report is too prevalent to have escaped my ears; but I knew my beloved husband had been the people's idol; I believed my gentle son stood not in your wrath, and I was sure that you would do me the justice to believe I never wilfully harmed a living creature. I therefore believed I had nought to fear: and relying upon your justice, no less than your generosity, felt assured I should pass on my way unmolested."

"Had I have known your intention to have passed this way, no rude hand should have touched your car, nor eye penetrated its recesses," said Wat; "but as it is, I trust the interruption that you have received will not induce you to set your heart against those around you. Thy noble husband Edward the

Black Prince, of immortal memory, was a just and good man, in addition to his brilliant qualities as a warrior, and looked not upon the people, low and humble as they were, as mere beasts of the field; all upon his estates enjoyed as much freedom as he dared bestow upon them, and he would have been yet kinder to them, but for the nobles and tyrants, who poisoned his ears, and sought to make him like themselves. You too, lady, have the blessings of the people of this county; you have done much good to the poor and abject, the cast down and oppressed, for which the Almighty—who never suffers good actions to pass unremunerated—will reward you, and your own heart will feel the lighter, and your sleep will be the more peaceful and undisturbed, when you reflect you have dried many a weeping eye, have relieved many an aching heart, and made happy those who were bowed to the earth by misery! There are few in the county of Kent who do not hold you in their estimation as high as your great goodness deserves; and thine own kindness to the humble and miserable have made us, one and all, believe thy son Richard to be as good in his heart as thou, being thine and Edward's son, and thy influence over him as well, will make him, when he has the power, practise those virtues we have little doubt you have instilled into his young mind."

"Alas!" interrupted the Countess," I would it were as you say; but his guardians and tutors so surround him, and bend him to their will, that my influence is not permitted to reach him. I know him to be well disposed. I am not at liberty to speak my thoughts respecting the manner in which he is counselled; but of this I am sure, he loves his people, and will do all within his power to relieve their miseries and redress their wrongs."

"He shall have that power," exclaimed Wat, emphatically, "and when it is placed within his grasp he must not shrink from wielding it, nor refuse the boon the people require, and will have; if you could cast your gentle eye, dear lady, upon every man who composes this mass of human beings, your heart would bleed to see the ravages which want, incessant toil, famine, anxieties, and miseries of the most terrible description have made in frames naturally powerful. You would shudder to look on the wasted skeleton-like forms, the gaunt visages, and thinly clothed sufferers, that crowd here in hundreds; you would weep to see the fathers of families as weak as infants, from illness and over-exertion, to procure food for their starving families, and your kind nature would thrill with horror if you could hear the tales of monstrous wrongs, and vilest of oppressions which they have each to tell. Your wonder would not be then that they had risen to remedy them, but that they had borne them so long or borne them at all. Tell this to your royal son—tell him he is in the hands of those who endanger his crown and their own safety—tell him never to believe the humble classes he reigns over are not the same flesh and blood as himself, but that they are of the same, only Providence has made him a king, and them vassals—tell him they have been wronged by his counsellors, and he must right them; let him but show a desire to relieve their miseries, and they will cleave right loyally to him; but bid him beware how he turns a deaf ear to their wants, their just demands, and I will not answer for any evil that may ensue: tell him it is in his power to avert bloodshed and create happiness, and if he refuses, the blood and evils be upon his own head and those who counsel him to his own undoing."

"Be not too rash and hasty to judge of my son by what may issue forth in his own name; he is very young, and his uncle—"

"Aye, John of Gaunt," replied Wat, speaking bitterly; "he who puts his hands before Richard's eyes to keep him from seeing the efforts he is making to obtain the crown, and keeps, at the same time, his feet on the people's necks; it will be a dangerous hour for John of Gaunt, when he falls into the hands of the true and loyal commons—his designs on the crown will then end as well as his oppressions of the people. But it is of little use filling thy ears with such converse as this; all we wish of thee is to tell his Majesty of our sufferings, of the necessity for their redress, which, if he assents to, we will peacefully retire; but if he denies them, his tenure of the crown and kingdom will be a frail one. Farewell to you, madam, may God bless and keep you. You shall be escorted until you have passed the heath safely, and in the event of any disturbance which may ensue, the arbitrary decisions of the legislature, if they are so blind to their own destruction as to give them—if you and your loyal son place yourselves in our hands, whatever be the issue of the struggle, I pledge my immortal soul you shall both be safe and free from harm. Farewell!"

The Countess returned the salutation with the greatest courtesy, and gracefully extended her hand for him to kiss, which he did with the utmost respect, and saying she would do her utmost to move the King to regard their condition with favorable eyes, she bade him farewell. A party of men, upon whom he could depend, accompanied her and her train of maids of honor, and men-servants; and as soon as it was known it was the good Princess of Wales who was passing through their ranks, they cheered her all the way, until she had completely left them all behind her. Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and Michael, saw that she was respected during her passage through the people, and then they retired to their tents.

The accession of numbers had been in two days extraordinary—from between thirty and forty thousand men, they had increased to one hundred thousand; and it became necessary, ere they departed to London, that they should all perfectly understand the laws which were to bind them together, the line of proceeding they were to adopt, to whom they were to look for orders, and the penalties which should be inflicted for disobedience, as it was most essential that all should have the common good in view, and sacrifice individual desires for mutual benefit.

The new comers, to a certain extent, were made acquainted with the orders for their regulation and conduct already promulgated. But, to set all doubts at rest, it was resolved by Wat, that the whole of that vast multitude should be addressed by himself, and made cognizant of the terms for their future benefit and redress of existing evils, which he intended proposing to the King, and the means he purposed employing to carry his propositions into effect; also, with the mode in which it was politic they should conduct themselves in their progress and stay at the capital.

The following morning, accompanied by Michael, Jack Straw, John Ball, and all those who had been appointed leaders of their respective divisions, he appeared in the centre of this mighty multitude upon a platform, which he had caused to be erected for the better making himself heard by those whom he was about to address. His appearance was greeted by a succession of cheers, so stentorian, they might have been heard for miles, and then the mob stood as silent as solitude itself to hear his words. However

before he commenced laying before them the code of laws, or charter, which he intended to demand the King's sanction to, and compliance with it in all its parts, he requested John Ball to speak to them, to explain the relative situations in the eyes of their Maker between themselves and those of whom they were about to seek redress. He right willingly complied, and the people greeted him gladly, for they knew him a friend, and one whose learning made him a valuable one. He waved his hand for silence, which was instantly accorded, and every ear bent intently to catch his slightest word. When he saw that the greatest attention everywhere prevailed, he commenced in a loud clear voice, and thus addressed them—

"Brethren, beloved friends, fellow beings, and fellow sufferers—and what is of more importance to ye all—people of England, I am called to address ye upon the motive which has brought us together in this abundance, upon the purpose which has made thousands rise against the few—the multitude against an inconsiderable portion. Is it because ye have pleasant homes and happy families that ye are here? Is it because you have a just share of the produce of your toil and labour, that ye have thus assembled? Is it because that any among ye can lay his hand on any household good, on any child, on any wife, and can say, 'This is mine, and the man lives not that can make claim to it; and in defiance of my resistance, my agony, or my most abject supplication, take it from me'—that you have risen up a whole population as one person? No! you will all cry with one voice it is because of the very reverse of all this. Then ye have not pleasant homes or happy families—ye have not the just share of the proceeds of your toil. There is nothing you can call your own, not even that portion of your life your Maker gave you power over—and why is this? is it a law of God's that it should be so? No! then why should it be? It is to support a few in riotous luxury, in extravagance and debauchery, at the expense of the starvation of thousands. Is there a law of nature that such a state of things should exist? I cannot find it; I have searched for it, but found it not. I have in vain tried to discover the right a few have to bend a mass of fellow-beings to their absolute will, because they were born in palaces, and the mass in huts. Is he who rules of a higher order of beings than those he drives like cattle before him? Is he endowed with natural and personal attributes of a distinct and more elevated class than those he makes the worm for his foot to crush? Is he descended from angels, while they are born of earthly parents—were Adam and Eve less his progenitors than yours, than mine? Was he at his birth less subject to the effects of heat and cold, of harm or injury, than you or I? Would he, if he had been born in a hut instead of a palace, or a costly manor, been still a noble? Were his ancestors always noble? Were all his ancestors, from himself to our first parents, kings, princes, nobles, high, mighty, or wealthy?

'When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then a gentleman?'

Were his progenitors? No! Were there any of gentle blood any better than another? No! save in disposition, Abel was better than Cain, because he was better inclined; but he was of the same blood as his brother who slew him, and if Cain was a tiller of the ground, Abel was a keeper of sheep. There were no lords, no kings, no princes then; all were equal, all labored, and every one enjoyed the fruits of his labor; those were the days when God had created the world, and those in it, after his own heart, and he made them equal. In what better degree of flesh and blood are these proud nobles than we now are, to what Adam and his sons were, that they should make so wide a distinction between us? Have they different forms to us, have they a brighter blood in their veins, and flesh of a better material than ours? Will they not die, as we, if wounded mortally with weapons? Do they not shiver in the cold, and pant in the heat as we? Will they not bleed if stabbed? Will they not be pained if injured? Will they not weep if sorrowful, laugh if glad, as we? Do they not lie down and sleep as we? Do they not rise in the morning refreshed from their sleep as we *should*, if we had our rights?—but, God help us all! there is little that is refreshing in our sleep! Do they not grow from youth to manhood, and decline to old age, and die from decay of nature, even as we? Are their actions better than ours? Are they more moral, more religious? Have they hearts to feel and sympathise with the miseries of those whom they will not deign to consider fellow-creatures, as those very people they despise? To every question is there but the one answer—no?—and to that also there is a negative. Then, if they are in no way naturally of a higher race than ourselves—if God looks on us all as equal, and judges us alone by our good or evil actions, where is their right to make and keep us slaves? Where is their right to make us slave and toil incessantly, to be wretchedly clad, almost starved, and miserably housed, that they may be clothed in velvets and chamlets, furred with grise? Why should they never labor, and we wear out our bodies and limbs in constant work? Why should they have spices and wines and fine bread, and we be compelled to eat rye and the refuse of straw? Why should they have the richest liquors, and we have nothing but water? Not but what any of ye would not eat his rye bread and drink water, in glad contentment, if he had a just share of his produce, and could call his home his own, and was free—free in the broadest sense. Who produces the wealth, upon which these haughty nobles pride themselves? Whose money, whose hard earnings makes the King rich and powerful—from whom holds he the right to rule? Why from you, the people! from those he keeps in abject slavery, in vilest bondage; and if they place him on the throne, and enrich him, have they not the right to displace him, if he abuses the power they gave him? Does he not take all from you? and what gives he you in return? —misery; the most bitter, the most agonising, the most unenduring—and will ye endure it? No!—I am answered in your presence here. Why were kings made at all? How came nobles to exist? Why, thus—in the earliest times the strongest man did what pleased him; he would not work, but waited until one much weaker than himself had procured food and made raiment—then he went and took them from him, and if he murmured, beat him. He did this to all; but two or three weak ones united together and attacking the strong man, killed him. But soon another sprung up in his place, and it became necessary to unite together always, that no strong man might injure or oppress the weaker; and when they began to dispute or cavil, it became essential to have one man who should decide all disputes, and whose decision all should respect and obey. The oldest man was chosen to fulfil this duty, and when he died the next oldest; but, in course of time, this rule was superseded, and parties of friends, instead of making the oldest and wisest man their chief, invested the duty in the son, whether he inherited his father's wisdom, or was a natural idiot. As communities extended, this chief's

power grew greater, and he made those friends who had supported him sharers in his powers, partakers of the wealth the people had given him alone, shared the country—which was not his, but the people's, to share—among those he pleased, and gave them a power over the people which it was not his to bestow. He had forgotten all this time that he was only a servant, and made the grand mistake of believing that he received his throne from God, instead of the people; his parasites and sycophants have fostered this idea, until he laughs to scorn those who tell him the truth, and ungratefully imagines that those who made him what he is have no voice in the matter. He will be taught differently; he will be shown that he is the people's servant, not their master, to oppress and grind them to powder, as the whim may please him. And those who are his servants, and make themselves our unjust masters, will discover that it is better to guide than drive; that gentleness would have succeeded, where harshness and injustice has compelled rebellion.

"The long period which ye have patiently endured wrongs and sufferings, bondage, and the most wearying toil, without rising up against it, proves that you would have borne the rule contentedly, and without murmur, if they had been but just and moderate in their deeds; but now they have placed themselves in the position of the strong man of old; and ye who were the weaker, and treated so, have now united to throw off your chains to release yourselves from their oppression: and let them tremble and pray to God for mercy, wishing most earnestly in their hearts that they had treated you as fellow-creatures. We are equal in all things, where nature and God is concerned: and are we to be rendered miserably inferior by a few, who, in the pride of their hearts, have elevated themselves almost upon the same level with God, when they are in reality no more than ourselves? Does not the same sun shine on us as on them? Will not the same rain wet them—the same water drown them—the same food support them—the same poisons destroy them—and shall we submit to be the slaves of a race in all things no better than ourselves? Shall not our homes be sacred from their blighting hand, our wives and daughters from their blasting, withering touch—our sons from their killing oppression? Yes, there is a voice gone forth among ye, that ye were not born to be slaves, and ye will make yourselves the free men God intended you to be."

A tremendous cheer accompanied this sentiment.

"You must eat," he continued, when the uproar had subsided, "and you shall. Aye, eat in plenty, what you have earned by the sweat of your brow. If you must labor—and that we must all do more or less—you shall at least enjoy the fruits of it, and each man find his home his castle. There shall not be the man, noble, or prince, who shall lay his hand upon one born on his estate, and say 'thou'rt my slave and at my disposal,' as the oxen that work the plough; but he shall pay him a just price for his labor, and shall not compel him to come or go whithersoever he pleaseth, and beat him for not completing his services to his satisfaction, or be able to command his wife and offspring to his will. And there will be no happiness on this earth for ye until you have gained this, and ye have the power in your hands to command it. Rest not until you have obtained it! You seek for freedom—be free, and remain so; once having obtained the boon, let it not again slide through your fingers. I leave you to our good leader, Wat Tyler, to explain to you how to obtain your freedom; I but seek to show you the right you have not to submit to oppression and injustice from any body of men, and the right also to enjoy those immunities and privileges which your contributions to the state make your due. There is no divine right in any man or men to lord it over you, and *if* there had been, the power would not have been given by God for the sake of creating misery and wretchedness. I have done. Be true to yourselves, be just in your transactions, and in your demands; but be firm; and, as you hope to be free, as you hope to gain all the good you have risen to obtain, pay every attention, deference, and respect, to our leader, Wat Tyler."

A deafening cheer interrupted him; when it ceased, he continued—

"He has been a fellow-sufferer, and has come forth nobly to lead you to your freedom; he will lay down his life cheerfully to serve you, to gain the object you so much covet, and which is justly yours; he has therefore a right to your consideration and service in return. As he will counsel nothing but what will be for the benefit of all universally, let all obey him implicitly, without any paltry weak-minded division of feeling. He stands at your head, and is most responsible for your acts, and in case of your discomfiture—which 'twill be shame to your manhood if it ensues—he will be the first singled out for the exercise of the nobles' fury; therefore you owe him, as you value your freedom, your best aid and assistance in carrying every order he may issue into effect. I have known him for years, and never knew a blemish or spot on his conduct. He has sacrificed a competency for the poor and helpless, the needy and miserable, and now their wrongs have reached their greatest height, he has stepped forward, uninfluenced by personal considerations, to serve you, and is worthy of your love and reverence. A king should be a good man—one who is wise and virtuous; and if ever man deserved, on such a principle, to reign over his fellows, that man is Wat Tyler."

A roar of applause followed his words, and then adding a few brief sentences of exhortation, and a short, but beautiful prayer, he retired, and gave place to our hero. For many minutes the cheering was so universal and so loud, that he found all attempts to speak in vain; but at length the desire to hear him produced silence, and not a sound issued from the enormous crowd to interrupt him. He spoke long and earnestly to them. Like John Ball, he shewed them how they were equally entitled to enjoy freedom with those whom chance had placed in stations considered superior to their own; and his voice and arguments were so clear and concise, that they went to their hearts—home, direct home—and affected them very strongly. If he spoke democratically, he spoke wisely—at least, he tempered his extreme opinions with an acknowledgment of the necessity, which, under the system existing, there was for distinctive classes, but repudiated all idea of any right in the highest power to oppress. He displayed strongly his knowledge of the miseries which everywhere existed, and the frightful and monstrous abuse of power which had been exercised upon those whom it had been mistakingly thought had no power to resist.

"There are certain positions in the state it is necessary we should support," he continued; "we cannot all be monarchs, and a leader is indispensable, and in a vast nation like England, it is impossible that one man can administer justice and attend to the common interest, which is all the king is made sovereign for. A council of wise men is therefore necessary; and these men should be of those who—no matter how they have them—are possessed of estates in the country, which will make their attention to its welfare a matter of personal interest; but

that the true source of all power, the people—the poorer classes, who must necessarily be so, from the property which, divided and subdivided as it must be among so numerous a class, being small to each—may not be, as they have been, trampled upon, or even unconsidered, it is requisite they should be represented by a council.

"As the trade and commerce of the country must be protected from the aggressions of foreign powers, soldiery must be maintained; and, for the due administration of the law, officers and justices must also be supported. As all these institutions are for our mutual benefit, all alike feeling the good they are supposed to dispense, it is just we all subscribe to pay their expense; and thus we have no right to quarrel with a moderate taxation. But when every one of these institutions is grossly abused—when justice is nowhere to be seen amidst those who sit to administer it—when it is scouted by all who are placed by the people to provide for their interests—when every opportunity is taken to increase the expenditure of the people's hard earnings in wasteful riot and luxury, to gratify a few whose own incomes render it unessential—when bloody and expensive wars are maintained to place our King upon a throne to which he has no real right, over a people who hate him, and who have a right to choose the man to reign over them—when, to support all this, and worse, far worse than this, the people are robbed of their property, and the cry is still more, more, more,—then is it time that those who created the people in power, for the administration of duties for the general interest, should rise up and pull them down from their high places, putting others in them who will do them justice. It is vain for me to enlarge upon your sufferings—they have been so terrific, have been so engrafted upon your hearts and memories, that no words, however warm and enthusiastic, will reach them; added to which, ye need no description of that which ye too well know.

"John Ball has told you that, before God, all men are equal, and he is right; before the laws, too, are ye, or ought to be, equal also. The humblest wretch on earth has an equal right to demand justice for a wrong as the proudest noble in the land, and it is the duty of an upright judge to grant it without consideration of person; he is placed on his seat to decide, and inflict punishment on the doer of wrong; he has nothing to do with the station of the person who has done the wrong; it does not come within his province to note it in any fashion. The law says a certain wrong shall not be done without a punishment; this law is infringed, and justice lays hold of the guilty one—he has not to consider whether he is noble, but whether he has done the deed—not whether he is wealthy, but whether he is really the perpetrator of the wrong; and, if it is proved in evidence that he is, justice has to fulfil the law, without asking whether it be a peer or a peasant, a prince or a serf, to be punished. This is the duty of the law, and why we pay for the establishment of its administrators; but all this is infamously perverted; the lawyers are knaves, and those high in power are their abettors. They make one law for the rich and another for the poor; the rich man pays the lawyer handsomely, and the wretched man who appeals against him is mocked with a show of justice, but is scorned and denied redress, and in most cases is thrust into filthy prisons on some false charge. How many thousand deeds of evil and villany has John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, committed? How many men has he made kill themselves in the madness of intense misery?—how many females, broken-hearted, in the dire agony of shame and pollution? [illegible] many grievous wrongs has he protected? and [illegible] is the humble man that ever obtained redress? [illegible] this is the man who seeks, covertly, to be king."

A deep growl of hate, like the hoarse murmur of a brewing gale, burst from the people immediately [illegible] uttered these words.

"He is the man," continued Wat, "who has [illegible] our greatest misery; it has been he who [illegible] the passing of enactments which have helped [illegible] to reduce us to the state of misery into [illegible] we have been plunged; he is the chief [illegible] people have had, and he seeks to dethrone [illegible] and take the throne himself. This monster of [illegible] tice, this iniquitous villain, this fattener upon [illegible] men's misery, this violator of every sacred [illegible] scoundrel of scoundrels, this murderer and [illegible] would be king over the people he has crushed [illegible] dust! They would be bright times for [illegible] England, with such a hell-hound for its [illegible] ruler; you would bear his yoke lightly and [illegible] as ye do now; you would be very happy [illegible] finding one moment for comfort, nor any [illegible] or possession that could yield you a smile [illegible] of joy, or yet a word of gaiety; you would [illegible] signed and joyous in thinking a charnel-house [illegible] for merry-makers, and the common routine [illegible] worse than captivity in the foulest dungeon [illegible] cruelty of man ever invented! You would [illegible] you tamely suffered him to wrest the golden [illegible] from the brows of the weak boy it now [illegible]

"He shall never reign!" roared the people [illegible] one voice. "Down with the tyrant! Death [illegible] of Gaunt, our oppressor!"

"He shall never reign!" cried Wat Tyler [illegible] his death will gain us little. If he has been [illegible] a villain that it would be doing society [illegible] have him dead, let us not imbrue our hands [illegible] blood. There is One there," he added, [illegible] impressively to Heaven, "who has noted his [illegible] who will punish him to the full for every [illegible] and wrong he has done to the meanest [illegible] upon earth; let us not anticipate Him in [illegible] ment, but let every one swear that he will not [illegible] of a king named John; that name has been [illegible] England. The villain who sat on the throne [illegible] that name, deluged it with the blood of [illegible] subjects, oppressed and drained them of their [illegible] and this John will do no less if he be king [illegible] no man swear what he will not perform, [illegible] shall not need fear the seizure of the [illegible] merciless wretch, and we shall be spared his [illegible] Let all our acts be tempered with moderation [illegible] with every consideration for those whose [illegible] our presence may make them believe [illegible] Our great numbers will prevent the nobles [illegible] us; and let the justice of our actions and the [illegible] tion of our behaviour shame them. Let them [illegible] are worthy of being treated as fellow-creatures [illegible] we demand no more than strict justice, and [illegible] temperate as our manners are, we will be [illegible] satisfied with nothing but an entire [illegible] our demands. If we behave moderately, [illegible] have all London with us; if intemperately, they [illegible] all be against us. Let us not inflict on [illegible] oppressions which the nobles have visited [illegible] but make them, by your deeds, say, [illegible] worthy men who have been shamefully [illegible] as they have not suffered their oppressions [illegible] them do us any injury, we will unite with [illegible] help them to gain the charter, which is [illegible] right.' This will be better than if we [illegible] rioting and destroying, for then we shall [illegible]

but an ill name, and, probably, the shame of being unsuccessful in obtaining our rights."

A general cheer gave a token of assent to his advice, and when he could again be heard, he proceeded—

"I will now tell you the demands that it is my purpose in your behalf to make, which, if granted and fulfilled, will lift you out of the condition in which you have been placed, and render you as near the chance of happiness on earth as you may reasonably expect.

"First, there shall be an entire and complete emancipation from slavery for yourselves and children for ever."

There was a tremendous cheer for this clause, and so on for every one detailed.

"Secondly," continued Wat, "the reduction of good land to fourpence an acre. Thirdly, the perfect, unrestricted right to buy and sell in all markets and fairs, the same as any merchants. Fourthly, that we pay no more taxes than the fifteenths which our forefathers paid—which I have calculated is more than sufficient to meet every exigency of state—the more particularly as population increases in a greater ratio than the wants of the State. Fifthly, a complete repeal of the game and forest laws, and that all parks, waters, warrens, and woods, shall be common to hunt and fish in; and for this reason do I demand this clause—God gave us all alike the fish of the waters, the beasts of the woods and fields, and birds of the air for our support; but these rich men, rolling in wealth so that they scarcely know how to contrive to spend it, say, you starving wretches shall not touch my fish, my deer, or my game—they are for my *amusement*; and hundreds, nay, thousands, have starved to death, surrounded by plenty, and durst not lay a finger upon the food God gave them equally with the nobles, because the law has said they shall be preserved for the noble's AMUSEMENT! They may still amuse themselves, but the people shall be able to feed themselves when they need it and have no other means. Finally, I shall require for you all a general pardon for all past offences.

"There is not one clause I have named which can be classed as exorbitant or unjust, and we will have them granted fully and entirely, or woe upon those who hold out in refusal. Be true to yourselves, and you must succeed; think of your wives and children—those who are dependent upon you—who have almost more than a life-interest in you; and let not any misguided acts ruin prospects so fair for them and yourselves. Be just to all, temperate, and firm, and freedom will be yours. May God in his infinite wisdom and supreme goodness prosper our undertaking!"

He ceased, and the people cheered him enthusiastically, continuing to do so for a long period, until he reached his tent, and prepared to give orders for their proceeding towards London.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Alas! how deplorable is his state, who, by the perversion of that power with which the gods have invested him as the instrument of public happiness, diffuses misery among the multitudes that he governs, and who is known to be a king only as he is a curse!" TELEMACHUS.

"Wide poured abroad, behold the giddy crew;
See how they dash along from wall to wall!
At every door hark how they thundering call!
Good Lord! what can this giddy rout excite?"
THOMSON.

"The whole number of the common people were at that time divided into three parts; of the which, one part was attending to destroy the mannor of Highbery, and other places belonging to the Prior of St. John. Another company lay at the Milesend, east of the citie. The third kept at the Tower Hill, there to spoyle the King of such victuals as were brought towards him." STOW'S ANNALS.

"Observed his courtship to the common people:—
How he did seem to drive into their hearts,
With humble and familiar courtesy:
What reverence did he throw away on slaves;
Wooing poor craftsmen, with the craft of smiles,
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their affects with him."
KING RICHARD II.

DURING these proceedings, Richard the Second was at Windsor Castle, but intelligence being conveyed to him of this formidable insurrection, he instantly quitted it, and threw himself into the Tower of London, where he was joined by his mother, the Countess of Kent, who related to him her interview with Wat Tyler, by Henry of Bolingbroke, his cousin, Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor, Sir Robert Hales, Lord Treasurer, and several other members of the government. The Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, was absent—fortunately for himself—in Scotland, arranging terms for a peace between the two countries; and Richard's other two uncles, Gloucester and York, were away. Rumours of the most fearful description reached the young King, and several of the council advised him to go in person and treat with the rebels; Joan, his mother, counselling so, as well as detailing her reception, and assuring him he would be well and kindly received, and had only to look upon them to be assured that intense distress had driven them to this step. The Archbishop, however, seconded by Sir Robert Hales, with much Christain charity, advised him strongly to send as many troops as he could muster, and slaughter a few thousands, which would "abate the pride of such vile rascals;" but the King was not of his opinion, nor were the majority of the councillors. It was therefore determined that he should go and meet them. Messages were conveyed to Wat Tyler, that the King would come to Greenwich on Thursday, Corpus Christi day, and confer with him respecting their demands. Accordingly Wat, attended by ten thousand men, a thousand of each county in arms, advanced along the banks of the river to meet his Majesty, until they reached Rotherhithe, when they descried the King's barge, decorated with banners, bearing the royal arms of England, advancing swiftly towards them; they uttered a tremendous shout, which so far from assuring the King, had the effect of alarming him. He had been unaccustomed to gaze on so much misery

and roughness, and could not believe that those whom poverty had adorned with rags possessed any of the attributes of virtue or honesty. The King required but little counselling not to land, and was rowed up and down the river in front of the people for a short time, while they were expecting every moment that he would land, and were only waiting to see where, in order to make an opening for him. At length he commanded himself to be brought nearer to the shore, and acting under advice, cried out in a voice, loud enough to be heard—

"What are your wishes? I am come hither to hear what you have to say."

Wat Tyler replied, in a loud, but respectful voice—

"If your Majesty will land, you shall hear what they are, and reasons giving you for the necessity of your consent to them. It is impossible thus to parley with you, such a distance being between us."

The people gave a cheer, and then the Earl of Salisbury, in something very like an agony of fright, exclaimed—

"Gentlemen,* *you are not properly dressed, nor in a fit condition* for the King to talk with you."

The roar of indignation which followed this speech might well have alarmed braver men than were with the King, and they, miserably frightened, immediately rowed away, at their best speed, to the Tower of London. The people were outrageously incensed, and Wat could scarce restrain them from the commission of the most violent acts. To be told, after having been reduced to the lowest dregs of poverty—after having been squeezed dry of every happiness and comfort by these ministers of the King, that they were not well dressed enough, was a taunt beyond endurance. They returned to Blackheath to relate to those who had been indulging in fond auguries of the best, the result of their interview. It is impossible to depict the rage and scorn which every man's countenance wore, when they knew of it, or gave an idea of the tumultuous uproar that ensued, when Wat made it generally known: all his persuasions for moderation seemed lost, and every one seemed bent upon having a bitter revenge for having been ground to despair, and then taunted for wearing its garb. Wat's order for an instant march to London was obeyed as soon as it was heard. Jack Straw, with all the Essex men, crossed the river and marched that way; and Wat, with the remainder, took the direct road. And now his energies for a leader were wonderfully displayed—he was almost ubiquitous. Backed by two hundred stout fellows, who were ready to obey his nod, he rode here and there among the people, persuading, exhorting, and *preventing* them committing desperate deeds. Still, with an irregular mass to the extent of one hundred thousand, it was impossible for him to prevent many acts which he had forbidden.

The people had an especial hatred for all lawyers, and no sooner was one espied than he was seized; and if he would not, when the Commons asked, "with whom holdest thou?" reply "with Richard and the true Commons," his life was of little value. They marched on through Greenwich, every one closing their houses, which were, however, unmolested, unless they belonged to some very obnoxious courtier or minister—then they were demolished—everything was destroyed—they plundered nothing. They came to Southwark, and made direct for the Marshalsea, which they attacked, broke open, and set all the prisoners free; they did the same at the King's Bench, for they knew that there were numbers confined there who were languishing in hopeless despair—the unjust victims of many a grasping Lombard or Fleming. They then attacked a number of infamous houses, which lined the banks of the Thames, near London Bridge, in the possession of a number of Flemish frows, who farmed them of William Walworth, the Mayor of London. These they burnt down entirely, and destroyed those of several others who were in bad odour. It was impossible for Wat Tyler to prevent this taking place; but he was enabled to see that no violence to persons or plunder was committed, and very little disposition, he was glad to find, was shown to attempt it. Admission was denied them to the bridge, the Lord Mayor having caused the moveable part to be drawn up; but the men of Surrey, who had joined the Kentish men, called to the citizens, and bade them lower it, for if they did not they vowed that they would set fire to the suburbs, and carry the city by storm.

The distress and misery had not been partial in England; it was no less felt in the capital than in the towns and villages. There were thousands of starving people within the city walls, who would have been situated in comfortable independence, but for the enormous taxation; they therefore sympathised deeply with "the Commons," and looked forward for their approach anxiously, eager to join them. When they were aware that they were so near, but waiting to be allowed to pass London Bridge, they assembled in great numbers, on the following morning, and in spite of the appeals and remonstrances—and, indeed, armed interference of Walworth, the mayor—they hastened to the bridge, let it down, and the Commons instantly poured over, and were received with loud acclamations of joy. Under the vigilant observance of Wat Tyler, their entry was conducted with the greatest order, and they continued advancing until the city was filled with them. They laid hands on nothing, nor hurt nor did harm to any one. Whatever they required in the shape of refreshment, they bought and paid for at a just price; and they would have remained thus peaceable, but for an unfortunate excess of friendliness on the part of the citizens, who commenced supplying the men with wines and strong drinks—the richest men throwing open their cellars, and the poorer tradesmen fearing to lose their goods, and hoping to conciliate the people, provided spirits in large quantities. The poor fellows, unaccustomed to taste wines or spirits, drank inordinately, and before the day was half over the greatest part of them were reeling about the streets half mad with drunkenness. The citizens proposed to them to destroy the prison at Westminster, and they met with a ready acquiescence to their proposition. Wat Tyler felt his heart sink as he saw the wild infatuated state the men were in, and augured the worst consequences to themselves. He saw it was in vain to attempt to stop them in their purpose, but as they still preserved some show of obedience to his orders, he determined to accompany them, and exert himself to the utmost to restrain the ebullitions of their passions, brought out by the drink they had consumed. Shouting, hurraing, hallooing, running and staggering along, they rushed along Fleet street and the Strand, and were joined by a large number of the men of Essex, who had broken open the Fleet prison and released the prisoners.

Aided by many of the citizens of London, who possessed great hatred for the Prior of St. John's, Sir Robert Hales, whose manor in Essex the Commons had destroyed, they attacked the Temple—much of which was Sir Robert's property—burnt

* Froissart.

and defaced the houses, stripped them of all the law books and records, which they carried into the high street, and there made an immense heap and destroyed them with fire; but, in the midst of all their riot, the order that there should be no plunder had been strictly observed. The most wretched member of the mob had not taken, nor was suffered to take, for his own emolument, one article of property of any description; huge bonfires were made of them; gorgeous stuffs, pictures, valuables of all kinds, were heaped on indiscriminately, making a pyramid of flames of an immense height.

All the insurgents who had committed these deeds joined Wat Tyler's party, on the expedition to release the prisoners at Westminster. When they reached the Savoy, however, their destination was suddenly changed. Finding themselves at the palace of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, they at a moment's notice, incited by the citizens, stopped and attacked it. It was well known that he maintained a huge rout of retainers, and the Commons found five hundred armed men prepared to oppose them, but they laughed their opposition to scorn. They attacked the palace by thousands—they assaulted it at every vulnerable place at the same time, and it was speedily found resistance was useless.

They gained admission by windows and doors, they took the retainers prisoners, slew some, and binding others, sent them away to be disposed of according to the pleasure of Wat Tyler. Then began the work of havoc and destruction—the furniture, massive and costly as it was, was hurled from the windows, pictures of great value followed remorselessly, plate, stuffs, velvets, cushions, dresses, armour, vases, jewellery, banners, shields, weapons, tapestries, feather beds, coverlets "whereof one with arms was esteemed worth 1000 marks," everything possessing any value or beauty was unsparingly torn from its resting place, and cast into the street to be burnt, and as each wing of the palace was sacked of its contents it was set on fire. The flames from the burning pile, as it licked up all that was cast into it, roared and crackled, and ran up a tremendous height, sending up volumes of smoke glittering with myriads of flakes of fire and huge sparks, flying in all directions in one immense golden shower. The men, maddened with wine and excitement, rushed here and there regardless of the flames—intent only on heaping costly fuel upon the fire—many falling victims to their over exertion in the universal object, perishing from the effects of drink and delirium; still, amid all the confusion, all the wild frenzy that reigned, the order against appropriation of the smallest article of the property to their own use was most strictly observed. Miserable objects in their appearance, both bodily and in their apparel, might have been seen staggering under massive golden dishes, goblets, and vases, each of which would have made them comparatively rich men—hurling them into the fire, or breaking them up to be cast into the flames, having no thought but of utterly destroying them.

Numbers who had broken open the wardrobes and cabinets, were pounding the rings and small jewellery, the precious stones, many of enormous value, into powder, and then casting them into the flames or the river: garments of velvet and silk, embroidered magnificently with gold, silver, and gems, were torn into shreds, and helped to feed the fire; armour richly emblazoned, of the finest material, and beautifully finished, were smashed with sledge-hammers, and when beaten into a shapeless wedge, tossed out to share the fate of everything else. The cellars were broken into, the tuns of wine rolled out into the streets—the heads staved in; and hundreds already mad with what they had drunk, added to the almost overpowering heat of the flames, making them rage with fierce thirst which the rich wines failed to quench, drank immoderately. Confusion was at its height—the drunken men screamed and shouted, danced round, and sung in all the extravagancies of gestures, which rude men like them, under the influence of so much wine, and a scene like this, might be supposed to exhibit.

Out of the whole assemblage, there was an immense number of better educated men, or rather whose position in life, as small tradespeople, had been more comfortable and higher in its relations than the serfs and villains, who were not guilty of the excesses which the lowest order of their companions were; which might be easily accounted for in the fact, that these poor creatures, having been held no better than brutes, treated in all degrees as such, fed, housed, beaten, made to slave and toil as such, were, in reality, scarcely removed from brutes. Shame upon those who had made them so! And, therefore, when under the influence of an inordinate quantity of wine, which previously they had seldom seen, much less tasted, it was scarce a matter for wonder that they should have plunged into the commission of deeds like those related. The class who had abstained were large in number, and supported our hero in his efforts to repress any violence to persons, male or female, and the strict performance of the prohibition from plunder: but to do even the wildest fellow there justice, they did not attempt to break it, save in one instance, which turned out terribly fatal for the thief. Among those who had been most animated in storming the palace, one man had been particularly observed by those he assisted. He lent his aid to break down the gates; was one of the foremost who, whirling with his axe, had struck down the first retainer he had encountered after the gates were down and admission obtained, and almost led the way through a strong party of armed men to the upper chambers. He had been noticed to be uncommonly zealous in breaking into wardrobes and cabinets, and remarkably active in clearing them of their contents; he had been one of the most nimble and dexterous in tearing open the plate closets, and pulling out the wealth they contained, and all of a sudden he was missed. If he had continued acting as he had previously done, he might have passed unsuspected, but a party of the Brenchleyites, who, by Wat's orders, had mixed with those who broke into the palace, in order to prevent plunder or outrage to any who might belong to the castle, had taken particular notice of him for his unlovely looks, and regarded his alertness with suspicion; for, in the midst of his patriotic shouts and disinterested destruction of the property, he looked upon the gold plate and jewels with an eager eye—an eye, that looked so like a covetous eye, they thought they could not be mistaken in its meaning, and resolved, therefore, to keep a watchful eye upon him. His sudden disappearance, at a moment of confusion, induced several to go in search of him, and they found him struggling with a man in the court-yard; they called to him, but with desperate exertion, the moment he perceived them after him, he hurled the man from him, and fled at the top of his speed; he was, however, instantly and hotly pursued, but by none so swiftly or actively as the man he had hurled from him. He had not got far into the streets before two of them overtook him—the man whom he had first wrestled with, and a sturdy Brenchleyite with a pole-axe. He struggled to get away, but in vain; and on tearing open his vest, he was discovered to have concealed jewels of great

value, and a large golden dish, magnificently carved and studded with precious stones of inestimable value. He was dragged towards Wat Tyler; hundreds flocked round him, and no sooner was his crime learned than execrations and hootings were showered on him from all sides; he grew livid white, for he knew his hour was come—he struggled, and tried to break away, but as well might he have attempted to have snapped the heaviest chains with his little finger, as have escaped from the dense mob that surrounded him. He was speedily before Wat Tyler, and his crime made known; and the man who had been most active in capturing him, cried out to our hero—

"This is the same villain who was doomed, by Jack Straw, to death at Rochester, and, through your clemency, was suffered to escape; it was this villain who broke into my dwelling and robbed it when I was miserably poor, and would have carried off my wife and daughters but for the sudden help of some friends."

Wat looked upon the man, and found him to be the fellow whom he had pardoned, from his promises of amendment, upon the ramparts of Rochester Castle, and he said, sternly—

"You are a ruffian whom no clemency will incline to good: you have brought your fate upon yourself doubly, both in joining, as against my express command, and disobeying the most positive order I have issued. Say your prayers at once, if you know any, for, this time, there is no hope for you: pray to your God for mercy hereafter, for none will you have here. Away with him, and do to him as ye list."

The men gave Wat a loud cheer, and instantly seized the fellow, roaring in their loudest voices—

"To the fire with him! to the fire! the property and the thief to the fire! to the fire with him!—hurrah!"

It was in vain that the fellow yelled and screamed: it was in vain he struggled as no man but one trying to escape from the jaws of a frightful death could struggle; he was borne along by the resistless torrent of foes until he could feel the hot breath of the fire scorching his eyebrows, and yet he was in their hands. He roared for mercy: he prayed, exhorted, blasphemed, he entreated in frenzied terms to be spared, but to deaf ears. He was seized in the arms of the mob as they would the dish he carried with him, as lightly and as easily, and was then thrown with powerful force into the burning mass. They saw, for one instant, a dark mass in the body of flames that roared around him, and enveloped him as in a bright mantle—they heard one long, piercing, quivering shriek, which seemed to pass through their heads like an arrow, and then no more was seen or heard of the miserable wretch. Then it was proclaimed, with a loud voice, that whosoever did as the thief had done, should meet with a like fate, and it was concluded by saying—

"We be zealous of truth and justice, and not thieves or robbers."*

The palace was not stripped of two-thirds of its contents ere it was one sheet of flames, and the greater part of it fell in with a tremendous crash, burying many within the ruins, and incarcerating others in the cellars, whose fate being unknown, they received no assistance, but perished miserably. The flames, after the fall of the roof and walls, shot up with a shower of sparks to a fearful height, and the people hurrah'd and halloo'd, and cast everything not destroyed by the huge bonfire they had made into the burning ruins; among other things, three barrels, supposed to contain gold and silver, were thrown in, which unfortunately happened to be gunpowder; it exploded with the most terrific violence, scattering the burning brands, stones, and fragments of furniture in every direction, throwing down the walls and several houses that stood near, and wounding many of the rioters; but this accident seemed but to increase their mad glee; it was greeted with shouts and cries, with boisterous laughter and wildest merriment, and made them jump, and dance, and halloo forth their rude songs with more joy than ever.

The destruction of this magnificent building was complete—it was destroyed totally; and when the mob found there was no more to demolish, they were anxious to depart for some fresh place, and left the smoking ruins to make towards Westminster; in their way along the Strand they attacked the Bishop of Chester's palace, but Wat Tyler prevented them doing more injury than breaking into the cellars, and rolling out many tuns of wine, with which they regaled themselves, and then they pushed on for Westminster. When they reached the prison, they found it guarded, and every disposition made to maintain it against them; of this they were regardless, and assaulted it with as much fury as they had the palace of John of Gaunt; the defenders found that it was as useless resisting such an immense superiority of numbers as the retainers of the Duke of Lancaster had, and therefore were not long in yielding. The Commons, once master of the prison, released all the prisoners, and suffered the men-at-arms, who had opposed them, also to pass free, and then they set fire to the prison, which was speedily consumed; they quitted it before it was half burned down, and coming before the house of the under-sheriff of Middlesex, one John Buterwike, were suddenly fired upon, because he thought they were about to attack him. If he had remained quiet, he would have been unmolested; as it was, his house was stripped of all it contained, and collected into one heap, and then and there burnt, and the house itself set fire to, and in less than an hour made a heap of ruins. They left there when their work was complete, and passing through the fields and along the green lane, St. Martin's, then lined with hedges, up to the village of St. Giles, they proceeded down Holbourne, until they reached St. Sepulchre's, where, acting under the influence of the citizens, who owed a great hatred to one Simon, a hospitaller, they burned his house down, and then attacked Newgate, which also was stormed, captured, and the whole of the prisoners set at liberty.

In the meanwhile, Jack Straw, with his division, a part of which had joined Wat Tyler in the late attacks, had marched to Lambeth—had there attacked the Bishop's palace, burnt it, and with it all the goods, and the books, registers, and remembrances of the chancery. When their work was finished they set forth to join Wat Tyler, and reached him, as he with his people had arrived at St. Martin's-le-Grand, the church of which contained a man named Roger Legat, who was chief sizar, or quest-monger—one who, by unjust oppressions, malpractices, base extortions, and crimes against all honor and honesty, had made himself universally hated. This man the citizens had picked out to retaliate upon for the wrongs which he, in conjunction with the extortioning and money-lending Lombards and Flemings, had inflicted upon them. It was of no avail that he sought the sanctuary of the church—if protected him nothing; the people followed him to the altar, which he mounted and seized the cross, and notwithstanding his abject screams

* Knighton.

for mercy, he was dragged forth, carried to Chepeside, and there beheaded. The same thing was done to numbers of Flemings and Lombards. It was in vain Wat tried to save them, and exerted all his influence; he could not have his eye upon the whole of that enormous mass; and wherever the citizens out of his jurisdiction, it may be so termed, had a spite or hatred, woe upon him to whom they bore it; they were like a band of mad devils—nothing but destructruction yielded them any satisfaction. It is almost incredible the number of lives and houses marked for demolition which Wat Tyler saved; but with all his efforts, he was unable to prevent, with such a wild multitude, the destruction of many others; thus, after the damage they had already done, they burnt down the house of Roger Legat, whom they had decapitated. They burnt also the houses belonging to the priory of St. John, and then the "faire priory of the hospitall of St. John itself, causing the same to burne the space of seven days after."

Notwithstanding all these wild and fearful proceedings on the part of the Commons, it is more than probable that they would have been guilty of none of them if they had not been incited to them by the citizens themselves, and by the foolish speech of the Earl of Salisbury.

Wat Tyler, hoping to put a stop in some degree to these terrible excesses, gave the order to march to the Tower, and demand an audience of the King; he was immediately obeyed, and the Commons, many in the rudest disorder, and with the wildest and fiercest cries, running on first to herald the coming of the main body. When they reached it and stated their demand, it was refused, and their answer was, the King could not be seen. It was not an answer to satisfy them, and they instantly began to lay siege to the Tower, on the side next to St. Katharine's, and the nobles, with the King, fourteen out of fifteen of whom had been denounced by the mob, were in great tribulation, and begged of the King to make proclamation to them to return peaceably to their homes, and a free pardon would be granted to them for all their trespasses. From a high tower of St. Katharine's, the King had witnessed the destruction of John of Gaunt's palace in the Savoy, also the hospital of St. John, and the various other fires; he could not tell how soon the Tower might be placed in the same situation, and therefore readily listened to the counsel, and complied with it. The heralds came upon the walls and made the proclamation, which was instantly and decidedly declined, and Wat Tyler returned for answer, that not a man would depart until they had their demands granted. This was seconded by the approving shouts of the multitude, and it speedily brought a clerk, who, obeying his instructions, wrote in their presence, and gave to a herald to read to them, the following proclamation:—

"Richard, King of England and of France, doth greatly thanke his good Commons, because they so greatly desire to see and holde him for their King; and doth pardon to them all manner of trespass, misprision, and felonies done before this time; and willeth and commandeth from henceforth, that euery one hasten to his owne dwelling, and set downe all his greeuances in writing, and send it unto him; and he will, by aduice of his lawfull lords, and good counsell, prouide such remedy as shall bee profitable to him, to them, and to the whole realme."

To give more effect to this, the King appeared on the walls, and set his signet to it; but, as he was immediately received with a tremendous uproar of sounds between cheering and execrations, he feared it was entirely the latter, and disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared. This proceeding enraged the people, and they would at once have stormed the Tower, but for the intervention of Wat Tyler, who bade them all follow him, which they immediately did, believing that he was about to lead them upon some expedition against the building and property of some merchants or nobles obnoxious to the people; but such was not his intention, and leading them to Cornhill, he bade them remain quiet for the night, promulgating, that all guilty of any excesses during the night should be punished with death; and bands of those who were sober and well-inclined, anxious only for their charter, and viewing these disorderly proceedings, which they were unable to prevent, with sorrow, were stationed among those most under the influence of drink, to prevent them by force from continuing their mad career.

When night drew on, and these poor misguided people were worn out by exertion and the fumes of liquor, and lay down to sleep in thousands upon the bare earth, with the sky for their only canopy, Wat Tyler had a consultation with Jack Straw and several of the leaders, upon the best means of proceeding, and restraining the Commons from further acts of violence. He uttered his sentiments powerfully, but sorrowfully, and when he ceased, Jack Straw spoke ably and strongly.

He felt equally with Wat Tyler the grievance of their conduct, but he said it was no more than he expected, nor had they not outstripped his expectations; they had only destroyed the goods and houses of those who oppressed them and grown rich from their oppressions, and they had abstracted nothing, like common thieves, for their own benefit. The houses and buildings destroyed were those only of men who had proved themselves immeasurable scoundrels, and had from their villany of conduct forfeited all right to consideration; still he could see it would give the King and his ministers grounds for complaint, but at the same time it would show them the people were no longer to be trifled with. Enough, however, had been done to prove this, and he agreed with Wat in the necessity of preventing to their utmost a continuance of their violence.

"But," he concluded, "although you spent some of your early years among nobles, and saw what manner of men they were, you are not competent to judge of those from whom we demand release from our sufferings. I have not been so much among them, but that I know them well; and my knowledge tells me that even such a lesson as they have received is insufficient to prevent them proving again faithless and treacherous. I can lament as well as you the reckless destruction of wealth and property, but cannot repine to see that which has been infamously obtained delivered unsparingly to the flames, and would calmly view the demolition of every noble's possessions rather than, believing enough had been done already, be tricked by the cajolings and promises of a set of scoundrels who will take the first opportunity to turn their backs upon the concessions they have been compelled to grant. No! let us rather lay London level with the ground, than retire without the strongest certainty that our charters are so granted that they cannot be infringed."

"London shall not be quitted by me and my followers until that has taken place," replied Wat. "Our charters shall be confirmed without the possibility of evasion ere we leave; but London must not be injured—we must not forget that in retaliating upon those who have injured us we may do injury to those it is our purpose to assist and protect. It is my proposition that the men be divided into three

bands, of one I will take the command; the second you shall head, and the third shall be under the command of Herbert Franklyn, for he is a citizen of London, and possesses as much influence over the Londoners as you over those of Essex, or I over the men of Kent. Let us each lead our men to a different part of the town, and then await the King's decision; it will be time enough when he refuses, to continue in the work we have begun, to compel him to do us justice."

"I quite agree with your counsel," said Jack Straw; "the king must meet us to-morrow, or we will force our way into the Tower—we must not sleep on our task, but have his decision at once; the sooner he grants it the better 'twill be for him, for it is impossible, for any length of time, to possess even the control over the people which we have now; and if they once fling aside the order which, to a certain extent, they have maintained, he may well tremble for the result. I will in the morning lead the men to Highbury, whither they are bent upon going, to destroy the manor of Sir Robert Hales; their hatred to him is so intense, that they will be satisfied with nothing but the total destruction of all his property, and woe unto him if he fall into their hands. His cruelties, his oppressions, and innumerable crimes, have doomed him to death, and, with all the influence I possess over the men, I should be unable to save him. The destruction of his manor at Highbury will keep them employed, and I will leave them there to join you, while you have a conference with the King, if he will grant it to you. Franklyn can keep his men at another part of the city; and should the King and ministers concede—of which there is little doubt, seeing that they must do so—we will gather the people together, publish our success to them, prevent any further destruction, and induce them to return peacefully to their homes."

"With the dawn, then, I will lead my men to Mile End," exclaimed Wat; "Franklyn can keep his men in the City, and I trust, ere noon, we shall see a successful termination of our expedition. Trust me, his Majesty will find me immovably fixed upon receiving every demand in full I require, nor will I suffer one man over whom I have any influence, to depart homeward until I have the charter signed, sealed, and attested with such legal precision and sacred asseverations, that the King, unless he is beggar of all faith, truth, and honor, cannot break them. I shall send with the daylight to the King, appointing to meet me at Mile End at ten o'clock; I fear not that he will keep the appointment, and for the satisfaction of your own followers, I wish you to be there."

"I will not fail you," replied Jack Straw.

After making a few more arrangements, and agreeing upon what course was to be pursued if the King should be mad enough to resist their wishes, they separated for the night, and wending their way among the sleeping people, who lay upon the bare earth in thousands, buried in profound slumber, they each retired to the resting-place set apart for them. A council also had been called in the Tower, which consisted of the King, the barons, William Walworth the Mayor, and several of the principal citizens. Among other propositions, William Walworth proposed arming themselves, six hundred men-at-arms, whom they had in the Tower, all their own servants, and as many other men as they could muster, and stealing silently into the streets, fall upon the sleeping people, as Walwworth facetiously observed, "who were asleep and drunk, for then they might be killed like flies, and not one in twenty of them had arms;" but his proposition did not meet with a very cordial reception. It was true he calculated that they could muster above eight thousand men well armed, but there was nobody forthcoming at all anxious for the honor of leading them to the work of slaughter. To do him justice, he would readily have undertaken his part, but the rest were not so desirous of hazarding their lives, and, as Froissart tells us, "nothing was done, for they were too much afraid of the commonalty of London."

The Earl of Salisbury, who had intimated to the Commons their unfitness to appear before His Majesty in their disgraceful state of want and starvation, into which they had been plunged to support him, was one of the loudest in negativing Walworth's proposition. He harangued the council at some length, and concluded by saying, it would be far better to cajole the rioters by fair words, and grant them all they asked without a remote intention of performing their promises, for it was then likely that they would suffer themselves to be gulled, and return home quietly; whereas, if they began to attack the rioters, and were unable to go through with their work, it would be all over with them and their heirs, and England would become a desert.

There is no doubt that his advice was to the full prudent, for if they had attempted to put in force the mayor's murderous counsel, and had failed, they would have been unsparingly swept from the land. His counsel met with the approbation and concurrence of the great majority of the council, and was adopted—Walworth receiving strict orders to make no movement whatever, which, with ill-concealed reluctance, he complied with.

The night passed away heavily and slowly to the King and his followers, and by daybreak Wat Tyler's messenger demanded admittance to the Tower, to deliver his message to the King. This demand was granted, and by the advice of the nobles who surrounded his Majesty, received for answer, that the King would meet his faithful Commons at seven o'clock that morning, to confer with them upon their grievances at the place appointed. Wat Tyler had made it a condition in the request for the King's presence, that he should come unarmed and unattended by any force, to prevent anything like a collision, which must have proved disastrous to the latter if it took place; and the alternative of his refusing, was the destruction of the Tower, and, in all human probability, himself. His Majesty's fall being certain to ensure the downfall of his nobles, they saw fit to advise him to comply with all the conditions, and were eager in assisting him to prepare for his journey. When the time arrived for his departure, he set out from the Tower on horseback, attended by the Earls of Buckingham, Kent, Warwick, and Oxford, Sir Thomas Percie, Sir Robert Knowles, William Walworth, and a few other knights and squires, Sir Aubrey de Vere bearing his sword. "Thus, with a few unarmed, the King went towards the rebels in great feare." In the meantime, Franklyn marshalled his men ready to take possession of Tower Hill; Jack Straw led his men to Highbury; and Wat Tyler, with the men of West Kent, and half the Essex men, besides a large portion of the Hertford, Suffolk, Cambridge, and Norfolk men, awaited the King's coming at Mile End. Scouts quickly brought him intelligence that the King was on his way, and he prepared to receive him. Jack Straw had just arrived from Highbury, where his followers were busy in destroying the mansion of the prior of Saint John's, and John Ball was also with them. Before the King came in sight, a messenger arrived on horse-

back, having galloped at his swiftest speed, bringing a message from Herbert Franklyn, stating, that as soon as the King had quitted the Tower, the men-at-arms within, in order to make friends with the Commons, had invited them to enter; that his followers, chiefly composed of the rudest rabble of London, had, regardless of all order, rushed in; and he feared, unless our hero and Jack Straw instantly appeared amongst them, the wild and half-mad people would commit the most terrible outrages. Wat decided in a moment how to act; he left Michael in charge of the people with him, and deputed him to receive the King, and, if possible, to detain him until his return; and then, with Jack Straw and John Ball, each mounted upon swift horses, galloped at a hard pace to the Tower.

Shortly after they had quitted, his youthful Majesty appeared before the Commons, still remaining at Mile End, and was received with loud acclamations, which though testimonies of respect and joy, sounded to the monarch and his nobles as the wild and fierce shouts of barbarians, bent upon compassing their destruction; and such was the effect it had upon the Earl of Kent, Sir John Holland, and the Lord de Gommegines, that they galloped off at the top of their speed, "not daring to show themselves to the populace for fear of their lives." The King, however, had gone too far to now hastily draw back, so, assuming as smiling a countenance as fear would permit him, he advanced to the people, who were to the number of sixty thousand. He was received, to his own surprise, with the greatest respect, and certainly with no little pleasure found himself unassailed by the rude clamors and fierce disrespectful bearing he had expected to have met with. Michael, as leader in Wat's absence of the men of Kent, and the leaders of the different counties, were gathered together, in order to state the people's grievances, the amelioration they required, and to see to what extent Richard was counselled to comply with their wishes. He treated them very affably, smiled on all, spoke graciously to many, and, aided by a prepossessing appearance, created an interest in the people which neither he nor they could have anticipated; and when he found he had made a favourable impression, he spoke in as pleasing a manner as he could assume—a manner which, as the people had accustomed themselves to believe him a species of monster, and expected to find him such, they were unprepared for, and suffered it to have an influence over them which a stern opposition or a haughty bearing could not have obtained.

"My good people," he exclaimed, "you have assembled in great numbers from all parts of the kingdom to have speech with your King. I am your King, and am no less your friend than monarch; state your wants and wishes, and believe me, for I speak in all sincerity of heart, whatever they are I will grant them, so much do I love you, and so well also am I assured that if you did not deem them essential to your welfare, you would not require them at my hands."

The people, delighted at his words, uttered loud cheers, and when they ceased, Michael made to him the demands which Wat Tyler had determined upon, and concluded by saying, "Thy people asketh for no more, but they will be satisfied with nothing less."

The King, who had made up his mind, as well as having been counselled to that effect, to grant everything they demanded, in the hope of inducing them all to retire to their homes, replied instantly—

"Your demands are fair and just; you shall have them granted to you."

The people burst forth with one long-continued cheer; and when Richard, who was overjoyed at his success, could be heard, he continued—

"It is my wish now, that having your demands complied with, you return peaceably to your homes, leaving a few of each village upon whom you can place reliance, to whom shall be given the charters sealed with my signet, and these charters shall contain everything you require fully granted; and in order to complete your satisfaction, my banners, as testimonies of my intention to abide by my royal word, shall be sent to every stewardship, castlewick, and corporation." And then, raising himself in his stirrups and addressing the multitude with a loud voice, he added—"You, my good people of Kent, shall have one of my banners; also ye men of Essex, Sussex, Bedford, Suffolk, Cambridge, Stafford, and Lincoln, shall each be presented with one; and here I pardon ye all fully and entirely for what ye have done; but that each may keep their word, and have no cause to break it, retire instantly to your respective counties, and avoid committing any further deeds of violence."

The people responded to his words with the loudest acclamations, and he, deeming it politic to quit them while they held so favourable an opinion of him, made them a graceful salutation and trotted off at a smart pace, glad that the interview had thus peacefully terminated. He was making for the Tower, but was stopped with the information that a vast body of men had possession of it, and were acting with considerable violence, and was advised to repair to his mother, who was at the Wardrobe in Castle Baynard's Ward. Being undesirous of trusting himself in the power of this division of the rioters, he followed the advice, and hastening there, passed the night, still in a state of tribulation respecting the way this terrible insurrection would end.

CHAPTER XIV.

"So the gates of the Tower being set open, a great multitude of them entered the same. There were at the same time in the Tower six hundred warlike men, furnished with armour and weapons, expert men in arms, and six hundred archers, all of which did quaile in stomach. For the basest of rusticks, not many together, but euery one by himselfe, durst presume to enter into the King's chamber, or his mother's, with their weapons, to put in feare each of the men of warre, knights, or others."

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"He could unneath pronounce these words, before they cried out, with a horrible noyse, that they neither feared the interdiction of the Pope to be above them."

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"Lastly, after forgiueness granted to the executioner that should behead him, he, kneeling downe, offered his necke to him that should strike it off; being stricken in the necke, but not deadly, he, putting his hand to his necke, saide thus: Aha! it is ye hand of God." STOW'S ANNALS.

"And when the King was come with his people, he stoode towardes the east, neere to Saint Bartholomew's Priory, and the commons towardes the west, in forme of battaile."

IBID.

"Shall we sit tamely down beneath these evils
Petitioning for pity? King of England,
Why are we sold like cattle in your markets—
Deprived of every privilege of man?"

SOUTHEY.

"And Wat, spurring his horse, cried to the commons to revenge him. His horse bore him about four score foote from thence, where he fell down half dead; and, by and by, they which attended on the King environed him all about, whereby he was not seene of his company."

STOW'S ANNALS.

WAT TYLER and his two companions spared not their spur until they reached the Tower, and speedily perceived the messenger had brought true tidings. A great portion of the people were in a huge mass on Tower Hill: and, from the shouts and the red glare of flame, he could tell, also, that the remainder were within the Tower revelling in acts of devastation and violence. He made his way into the Tower, and found the people running up and down in hundreds, roaming here and there to find out the wealth the fortress contained, in order to treat it as they had all the rest. With much difficulty Wat managed to draw them from their destroying work; and, with the aid of John Ball and Jack Straw, induced them to quit the Tower without doing further damage. At first, when he strongly rebuked them, they were restive; but when they were given to understand that if they persisted in disobeying orders they would have to encounter the men of Kent and Essex, and such of the other counties as had sworn to obey Wat as their leader, they were brought a little to their senses, and followed him. He led them to the Tower Green, where he had seen the rest assembled, and on making his way among them was grieved as well as shocked to see the mangled bodies of several men lying upon the ground; he fiercely demanded how this came to pass, and had the whole matter related to him by Herbert Franklyn, whose influence over his followers had been insufficient to restrain their violence.

It appears that no sooner had the King and his followers disappeared from the Tower, than several of the men-at-arms, fearing a miserable fate unless they became friendly to the commons, had made overtures to some of the people that, if they would do them no hurt, they would admit them into the Tower. They readily agreed to this, and the drawbridge was lowered; the people, in number close upon 20,000, instantly rushed in, flocking through every avenue, and disregarding all order or attempts to make them act with moderation. There were 600 men-at-arms and 600 archers within the Tower, who offered no resistance; but, as an old chronicler hath it, "all of which did quaile in stomach;" however, they were, according to the agreement, unmolested, but every room was roamed over—the apartments of the King and of his mother; the men throwing themselves upon the King's bed, and sitting themselves upon the seat, out of mere derision. They broke into the chamber which contained the Princess of Wales, and, "that more is, inuited the King's mother to kisse with them." Franklyn, however, succeeded in rescuing her from their hands, when, overcome by fright and horror, she had swooned away, and had her conveyed to a boat, and then rowed to Castle Baynard, where she remained until her son's arrival. While she was being removed, hot search was made for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert Hales, and others who were obnoxious to the people; but for a long time none of them were discovered, until a servant of the Archbishop was seized, and being threatened with death, disclosed to the rioters that he had left the Archbishop at prayers in the chapel after mass had been said. They compelled him to lead them to the spot, which, fearing for his life, he did, and the Archbishop was seized.

"Where is the traitor?" they cried, as they poured into the chapel. The Archbishop was upon his knees as they entered; but, though suffering from much alarm at their appearance, he assumed a calm and placid countenance, relying upon his sacred character, and the place itself, to save him from violence—but it was a vain reliance.

"I am the Archbishop, whom you seek," he said, mildly, "but not a traitor."

They paid no heed to his mildness; he had been too well known for his arrogance, for his haughty pride, and for the innumerable evils he had done to the people—for his long career of riotous debauchery, for his granting absolution for the worst crimes to the rich, and for dealing out damnation wholesale to the miserable and wretched, whose only crime was poverty and inability to pay for masses or purchase indulgences. The affected gentleness and sweetness of manner did not go down, and he was remorselessly dragged from the chapel to the Tower-hill, where a block was placed; he was commanded to kneel down that his head might be stricken off, and then his mildness faded into fright.

"What is it you would do, dear brethren?" he cried; "what have I done that ye would thus take my life?"

"Deeds!" cried a brawny fellow, who held him by the shoulder, "which would have cost many a serf his life, if he had only thought or dreamed of; the law was made for all alike. You have sinned enough to cause your decapitation, and so you musn't be surprised that you should meet with the punishment you have inflicted on hundreds who have not committed half so many crimes as you have."

"Spare me!" cried the Archbishop, with frenzied earnestness.

"No!" cried the man, coldly; "you cut off the head of my brother for stealing a deer, when he and all his family were starving. My mother went down on her knees to you, so did my father, so did his wife

and little ones! but your heart was stone to them; you spurned them all, and sent my brother to his doom, while you returned to feast on venison which was no more yours than his, for God gave the beasts of the earth for food to all alike; you showed no mercy, you shall have none."

The Archbishop turned from him to others; all regarded him with unrelenting eyes, and he was once more requested to kneel down. Then suddenly he cried angrily and threateningly—

"Take heed of what ye do: remember ye, that I am God's minister, that I am your pastor, and if I be killed ye will not only have to endure the wrath of God, the just avenger of injuries done to his servants, but the Pope himself will lay all England under interdiction."

The speech was greeted with roars of scornful laughter, and the people desired him to do away with any idea that they had any fear of such threats happening; they even told him it was mighty probable that if they had the Pope there they would serve him the same. When the miserable prelate found that argument failed, he resorted to others, but could not convince the Commons that they ought to let him live, and growing impatient, they almost forced him upon his knees. When he found there was no hope, he said his prayers fervently, and gave his pardon to the executioner, which office the brawny fellow who had recently spoken to him undertook. When his neck was bare, the man took a massive sword, and whirling it round his head, he exclaimed energetically—

"This is to revenge my brother!"

There is only one place in the vertebræ of the neck which a knife or sword can separate at one cut or blow, and as the man failed to hit him there, he mangled the neck without separating it. The unfortunate Bishop gave a dreadful shriek as he received the blow, and put up his hand to his neck, crying—

"Aha! it is the hand of God."

The man who gave the blow seemed horrified at his own work, for he struck again instantly, but without effect, save severing the Archbishop's fingers, which he had placed upon the wound. He struck again, and again, for eight successive times, ere he could separate the head, and when he had succeeded, he cast the sword from him and fled.

The mob, however, seemed actuated by no such feeling, for they gave a loud cheer, and took up the head, which was sent by a party, fixed on a pole, to be placed on London Bridge. The people had hardly disappeared with the head, ere a band of fellows arrived, dragging Sir Robert Hales, Lord of John's, and Lord Treasurer of England; John Legg, "one of the King's serients at armes;" and William Apeldore, a Franciscan friar, who was the King's confessor, and one of the farmers of the taxes. To each of these was the hatred of the people extreme, uncompromising, and unrelenting; they would listen to no appeals for mercy, and giving them but a short time for prayer, they decapitated them, as well as a number of Flemings and Lombards, who had taken refuge in the Tower. Many of these were disguised, but that availed them nothing—for unless they could pronounce "bread and cheese" clearly, they were known to be Flemings, and off went their heads.

All these scenes had been transacted ere Wat's arrival, and all he could do was to marshal the people into ranks, and lead them from the spot to the main body at Mile End. He addressed them, and endeavored to convince them how much injury they were doing their cause, and how little disposed Richard or his counsellors would be to grant them their demands and a free pardon, if they continued committing such ravages and destruction. Somewhat convinced by his arguments, they fell into ranks and followed him quietly towards Mile End; but before they reached it they met Michael and the Commons advancing to London, and Wat then heard the result of the interview between the King and the people. He was pleased at its promise of success, but resolved not to leave the Capital till he was sure that it was set beyond the possibility of a doubt; he therefore determined upon having an interview with Richard the following morning, and compelling him to make oath he would perform every promise he made. He then bade the people he had led from the Tower to fall in with the rest, and follow him to Smithfield, at which place he purposed meeting the King. They did as he desired, and he led them to the market-place, and arranged them "towards the west in forme of battaile." Here they took up their position for the remainder of the day, slept there that night, and in the morning awaited there the coming of his Majesty. Upon the night previous, a great number of charters had been drawn up by the King's command for the people of the various counties, and forwarded to them. As they were received they were sent to Wat Tyler, who, on perusing them, found that they were ingeniously worded so as to evade the fulfilment of every demand they professed to grant; the people were incensed when they heard this, and could scarce be restrained from making fresh outbreaks, but at length complied with Wat's command to remain quiet until the morning, and then he promised them if he was unable to obtain from the King all they required, he would give up all the palaces of the nobility, and the nobility themselves to their fury. This pacified them, and they did not attempt to stir from their places until they received the command of our hero.

Morning broke—the King had received Wat Tyler's summons to meet him, and was in no condition to refuse compliance with it; he accordingly appointed after dinner, as if desirous of driving off the evil hour as long as he could, and when the time drew near, he left the Wardrobe in Castle Baynard's Ward, where he had passed the night, and instead of going direct to Smithfield, he went to Westminster. He was attended by a train of two hundred persons, consisting of nobles and knights; when he arrived there, he was met by "the Abbot and convent of that abbey, with the chanons and vicars of St. Stephen's Chapell," all dressed in their richest robes. They led him by the charnel house into the abbey, from thence to the church, and ultimately to the high altar, where he "devoutedly prayed and offered." When he had completed this ceremony, he went to the chapel, called "Our Lady in the Pewe," where he repeated his prayers; and then, being unable longer to delay the time, he departed for Smithfield, and, like a culprit about to receive punishment, he advanced to St. Bartholomew's Priory, and there stationed himself to receive our hero. Just as the King arrived, a man made his way through the people to the side of Wat Tyler, and requested speech with him; at the same moment it was announced to him the King had arrived, and the man was about to be removed by several of the Commons, when Wat stayed them.

"What is your will, my good fellow?" he inquired of the man.

"The King has arrived!" cried several voices to him eagerly.

"Let the King wait!" he replied; "many thousand poor men have had to wait for him—now he must wait for one poor man. What is it you require of

me?" he again demanded of the man requesting speech with him.

"My name," replied the man, "is John Ticle; I am a maker of doublets, living here in London. I have made sixty doublets for as many of your followers, and they have referred me to you for payment."

"What sum do you require?" inquired Wat.

"Thirty marks," replied the man; "I am very poor, or I would not press for payment of your good followers."

"Your demand is moderate and just," replied Wat, "and you shall be paid, were it thrice the sum; look to me for the money—you, and all around ye shall, if it please the Almighty so to favor us, be well paid this day. Remain here until my return—"

"Which of ye call yourselves leader of this rabble?" cried a knight, named Sir John Newton, haughtily, suddenly riding up, bearing a message from the King.

Wat Tyler eyed him for a moment sternly, and then taking no further heed of him, continued addressing John Ticle—

"Do not quit this place," he said, "and when I return you shall have your dues, and something to boot."

"Do ye knaves lack tongues as well as grace?" cried the knight, enraged to find no one took the slightest notice of him.

"You lack grace; if you have too much tongue you might spare something from one for the other," exclaimed Wat, assuming a bearing as lofty, and certainly with a better effect than the knight.

"What graceless varlet are you," exclaimed the knight, "who dares speak thus insolently to a belted knight?"

"One who dares tell a King he is in the wrong, when he cruelly oppresses a famished people!" replied our hero. "My name is Wat Tyler, and I am the chosen head of the *rabble*, who, like the worm, having been trodden upon, have turned."

"Oh!" said the knight, "then it is to you I am to address myself. I bear a message from the King."

"Deliver it!" exclaimed Wat, briefly.

"His Majesty commands that you immediately appear before him!" said the knight, imperiously.

"His Majesty seems to forget he is in the position of a suppliant," exclaimed Wat, emphatically; "ere he sent his commands by so insolent a messenger, he should have been assured of his power to compel obedience."

"Slave! dost thou dare—"

The knight's angry speech was stayed by a movement of Wat's hand.

"Slaves we have been," he exclaimed, "but are so no longer; thou'rt a slave of the worst description—because, with the power of being independent, thou dost pander to the evil passions of tyrants and oppressors. Hie thee back to thy master, thou slave! and tell him I will come when it pleaseth me."

"Such is thy message, thou churlish peasant?" cried the knight.

"It is," replied Wat; "it had been a more courteous one had the King sent a more courteous messenger. As it is, thou wilt be burdened with nothing more nor less; and if thou wilt take my advice, thou wilt clap spurs to thy steed and quit this spot at once. I can see thy haughty speech has brought on thee the angry glances of those whose hands may administer thee no evidence of their goodwill, but contrar'. Away with thee! thou hast my reply."

Sir John Newton cast a look at the Commons, and perceiving the overhanging brows of those around, saw fit to follow Wat's counsel. He pressed his heels to his courser's flanks, and without making any salutation or obeisance, he galloped back to the youthful King.

"Should the King prove hostile," muttered Wat, as he watched the retiring knight, "that is a life that will be forfeited to the people's vengeance."

It had been arranged in drawing up the men in West Smithfield, that the best disposed should form the van, and those over whom the leader possessed least control should be divided into the centre and the rear. A portion of the men of Kent, with a body of the men of Essex, Hertford, Cambridge, Sussex, and Suffolk, were in front, while a large body of Kent and Essex men, upon whom Wat and Jack Straw could place reliance, were mixed with those inclined to be refractory in the centre and rear; thus the men immediately in the van were not those who were most attached to him, or knew his worth sufficiently to have enabled them to revenge the catastrophe, which was certainly unforeseen by them, that was shortly about to take place; but those who knew of him only by report, had accepted him as a leader, because his "name was great in mouths of wisest censure," and found, in this instanse, common report not to be a common liar, for his conduct had been all they could have desired from one through whose guidance they hoped to gain their freedom. They consisted chiefly of men who were in possession of small farms, and had still, although their property through oppressions had been miserably curtailed, some property to lose, and were more cautious in in their conduct than those serfs who had nothing to lose and everything to gain. They stood under arms, ready to perform all that Wat Tyler commanded them, for they had had evidence of his moderation sufficient to assure them he would not counsel any extreme conduct, unless their condition demanded it. As he was about to quit them, he gave orders that not one should stir from his place until he gave them a signal, and then they were instantly to advance. Michael advanced to his side, and said he would accompany him to the presence of the King, but Wat declined, and signified his intention of going alone.

"I wish to accompany you as well," exclaimed Jack Straw. "I have no faith in the honor of those with whom you will have to deal, and they will, I think, be less inclined to be arrogant and haughty when they see thee attended by a body of friends."

"It is the doubt of their courtesy which makes me resolve to go unattended," exclaimed Wat; "their scoffs or sneers, their pride or arrogance, will not move me from the point I seek to carry. I shall not heed one look or remark that does not bear on the question. I can be firm enough to make them respect me and my cause, but I cannot answer for those who may accompany me. A supercilious look, or insolent speech, or a scornful taunt, may produce a catastrophe I am desirous of avoiding. My command over my temper will be a surety to me that it will not occur, unless they madly bring it upon themselves; and I am convinced you have sufficient faith in me to rest satisfied, that though alone in conference with the King, it is the interest of the people alone I shall seek to obtain, shall demand, and quit not the presence until I have fully and firmly placed beyond it the power of alteration."

"It is no doubt of you, Wat Tyler," exclaimed Jack Straw, "which makes us desirous of accompanying you, but the entire want of confidence in those you will confer with. They are a treacherous body, and will stick at nothing to compass their ends;

they may rob you of life, ere we have the opportunity of saving you, and all the revenge we may afterwards take will not restore you to us."

Wat Tyler smiled; it was a thoughtful, melancholy smile, and seemed rather one of foreboding than to dispel any thought in others that his hour was near at hand.

"They will not dare to raise a hand against me," he exclaimed, "with such a body of my followers in their eyes; but if they should, and I should fall, it is my most earnest wish, nay, my positive command, that not a single hand be raised to shed blood to avenge me. Shedding blood, as you have said, will not restore me, and will not improve the condition of the people; let them be firm in their demand for the charters—let them not separate until they have obtained them, and never heed what had befallen me, more than to throw away a kind thought upon me when I cross their memory. Let us talk no more of this. Your hands—farewell. I come to you with the ratification of our charters or I come not at all."

He shook hands with all heartily, and then giving his horse the rein, he galloped up to the King, and stayed not until his horse's head nearly touched the flank of Richard's.

"You are his Majesty of England," exclaimed Wat, saluting him with a respectful obeisance.

"I am," replied the youthful King, returning it with an affable smile; "and you are Wat Tyler, the renowned smith of Kent, the leader of my people against their lawful king. What is your purpose in this rebellion?"

Wat Tyler smiled almost in scorn, as he replied—

"If your Majesty had been taught that you were placed over the people to preserve their rights, to improve their condition, to attend to their wants, and, through your Parliament, so to legislate for their welfare, that there should not be a voice through the land crying out in sorrow and misery, through want and oppression, you would never have put such a question to me; but you are very young, have lived a life of indolence and luxury, have never known the want of a meal, or a place to lay your head in at night to sink into a wretched sleep in order to wake in the morning and see starvation staring you in the face: have never felt this, and can little sympathise with those whose daily portion has been the misery I have described; but still you are the King, the fountain head from whom relief alone can flow. It is true thou art a puppet, the emblem of royalty, the image of monarchy, set up to make the people think they have a King, while those by whom thou art surrounded take the power from thee, and in thy name inflict the direst oppression. You are the screen behind which they work their villany; you are the mask they put up to fright us, while they draw from us all our hard-earned gains, and bind us with a yoke of iron; and to them through thee, puppet as thou art, I must address myself, that thy councillors and ministers may hear and know the penalty of a continuance of their vile acts."

"Audacious rebel!" cried Sir John Newton, drawing a dagger, "dare you thus address yourself to the King?"

"Put up thy dagger, knight!" said Wat, coolly, "and give thy speech only when thou art addressed—yet stay; give me thy dagger, thou'rt too intemperate to wear one during this conference."

"Give it to thee, base hind!" roared the knight; "an' I do, it shall be in thy heart."

"Look ye, sir knight," exclaimed Wat, sternly; "it is my intention to conduct this interview with his Majesty with temperance and moderation, but firmness. It is for the youth's sake as much as mine; for a single word from me would place him in my power, and thee and all thy followers in death's arms—but this word I shall not speak unless moved to it through thy intemperate acts; therefore, unless thou wouldst be traitor to thy King, and endanger thine own life, I would advise thee to give me thy weapon."

"I a traitor to my King!—thou liest, knave!" cried the knight enragedly.

"Peace!" exclaimed the King; "give him thy dagger, Newton, and let him proceed."

"Your Majesty's wishes are my commands," replied the knight, and delivered the dagger to Wat, but with a very ill grace.

"I will trouble thee for thy sword also," said Wat, still preserving the same imperturbable coolness; "thy sword may cause as much mischief to thee as thy dagger; thy tongue may wag as it pleases—it can do no harm, for the loud words of foolish minds are not to be heeded."

"Base scoundrel!" shouted the knight, foaming with rage, "I will part with my life rather. This sword was the King's, and never will I resign it; thou durst not ask it of me if there were but thou and I here."

"By my faith," said Wat, with a smile of contempt, "it is easy to boast in a large assembly like this; but to my thinking, were we to be alone, I should have less trouble to obtain thy weapon and thy prayers for mercy, where now I have nought but thy arrogant speech. Thou delayest the conference, knight, and dost marvellously lack common prudence, or thou wouldst not strive so much to have this parley conducted in the midst of a hundred thousand men, whom, an' thou remainest refractory many minutes longer, it will be my task to summon here."

"Give up thy sword, Newton," cried the King, eagerly, not at all desirous for Wat to put his threat into execution; "thou shalt have another anon from me."

The knight, with a scowl of rage and hatred, unsheathed his sword, and tendered it to Wat, who took it and laid it across the crupper of the horse, and then turned quietly to the King, and said, pointing to the vast body of the people—

"Your Majesty seest yonder people?"

"Yes, truly," replied Richard; "wherefore dost thou ask me that question?"

"You shall know anon," he replied; "there is not one there who will not obey my law and commandment; they have all sworn their faith and loyalty to me, and they will keep their oath to the letter."

"I doubt it not," replied the King; "but why dost thou tell me this?"

"Because you should see what are the results of oppression and misrule!" returned Wat Tyler; "the whole of that vast body of people are thy subjects—according to the law by which we are governed, they should obey thee, be true and faithful, and loyal to thee—look up to thee with reverence and respect—repeat thee in their prayers, and couple thy name whenever spoken with blessings; but instead of this, thou hast so abused the power bestowed upon thee, that they will no longer confess themselves thy subjects. They refuse to be faithful and loyal to thee—they speak of thee with scorn, and, instead of being remembered in their prayers and mentioned with blessings, they couple thy name with execrations and curses; and thinkest thou, if thou hadst performed the duty for which the people placed thee upon the throne, they would thus bear thee in their minds—they would have quitted their homes to assemble thus in a body to demand their rights? King, they placed thee on the throne—"

"I am the Lord's anointed!" exclaimed Richard, haughtily; "I received the crown from God, not from the people."

"That is a juggle of priestcraft, which will only suit the weak minds of the superstitious," cried Wat; "but even if you had—if even you are the Lord's anointed, and received the crown from Him, the Father of all mercies, it was given you to ensure the happiness of the people, not to inflict misery upon them; it was given you to remedy any evils which might befall them—to render them justice in their transactions with their fellow men whenever they needed it. Your office is to be to your fellow men what God is to us all, a guard and a guide, a parent and a protector, and the legal oaths you take when you assume the crown are to that effect; but how have those oaths been fulfilled?—how have the duties of your office been performed?—every promise violated, every duty unfulfilled, and every degree of injustice and rank oppression substituted."

"You use bold words, peasant," said the King, frowning.

"Dost thou remember thou'rt in the presence of thy King, rebel?" cried Walworth, the mayor.

"I am not likely to forget so important an epoch in my life, and in the lives of those who accompany me," said Wat, bitterly. "You call me rebel; you call those who have risen, because they can no longer bear the wrongs heaped upon them, rebels; but, King of England, which most deserves the title, thou or we? You have duties prescribed to you by God, and those who place you in the regal chair—duties you have sworn to observe and perform. You scorn them, treat them as nought, run riot in debauchery, levy imposts to support them which level the people in the dust, those whom it should be your constant care, as they support you, to raise up, and lead on as far as it is in your power, to happiness. You rebel against every law imposed on you, and we bear your injustice, your exactions, your injuries, your oppressions, until we can bear no longer—until we must rise up to assert the rights which are ours, or die miserably; and yet we are styled rebels and traitors. Base slaves! whose portion is to live in misery and die in despair, we were wronged in every form the cruelty of sordid minds could invent; we seek redress from this gross injustice, and yet you term us rebels."

"You should have petitioned," exclaimed the King.

"Petitioned!" echoed Wat, with scorn. "So we did. We sent petition after petition—every country town, village, or castlewick in the kingdom; to what effect?—they were spurned and unheeded! We found petitioning a weak manner of proceeding, and therefore we now *demand* redress."

"Of what do ye complain?" asked the King.

"Poor boy!" said Wat, mechanically, half-soliloquizing, "how little ye know of the people you are set up to govern!" Then he exclaimed in a louder voice, "your Majesty would have been spared that question if you would ride with me amongst yonder assemblage; the care-worn frames, the ragged garments, and the faces, on which the iron hand of despair has set its brand, would make your young heart wring with agony as you perceived of what they complained. Listen to me, Richard. 'When God made man, he gave him dominion over the earth, and over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth'—so says the Holy Book. He gave him power over them that he might eat and live, and this power he gave to all equally; but he gave no man power over his fellows, to say this earth is mine, this animal or fish is mine, unless he had tilled the one and caught the other; his labour made whatever property he possessed, and when he had done toiling he had it not torn from him; he gave it to the hunter, perhaps, for food, but still he enjoyed the fruits of his labor. What is there different on the face of the earth, in the laws of God and of justice, that it should not be so now? Yet it is not. You are King—you claim the whole country, the beast, and fowl, and fish—you claim the people, and tell us that you have that power given you from God to do thus; you cannot subsist and keep your dignity without the produce of our labor, and we cannot live without eating; yet you grant us the scantiest pittance for our toil, and continually make that pittance less, until nature cannot bear it and still exist. If God gave you the divine power, he did not give it you for so bad a purpose; and in such a case, you have perverted the purpose for which it was given you, and are unworthy to reign. You throw in our teeth when we cry for justice, that you are the Lord's anointed, and have a right to do as ye list. How know we He gave you that power? At your birth you were naked and helpless as we—you required the same care, the same attention, the same need of a mother as we; your divinity would not have preserved you from the suffocating effects of heat, or the freezing effects of cold; you felt the cravings of appetite, and would have died if they had not been satisfied, the same as we; and when you die you will equally with us be the food of worms, and at the last day will be judged by your actions as a man, not a king. In what are you better than us, that we should be the sufferers by your whims and caprices? Is't not the law that if a judge be convicted of base and criminal practices, he should be cast from his bench? And if there is justice in that, what should save a king, who has tyrannized over and oppressed his people, from being hurled from his throne? But understand me, Richard, the indignation of the people is not directed against you personally, but against the ministers, whose tool you have been. If you could know the bitter miseries the people have suffered through them, you would make it your study to relieve them, instead of prosecuting a war against a people who justly claim a right to place a monarch of their own choosing upon the throne. Instead of thinning our villages by withdrawing the youngest, and, therefore, best men from their homes, and sending them to slaughter others and be themselves slaughtered, you would employ them in improving the country—in bettering their own condition, and increasing the internal wealth of England."

"The crown of France is mine," cried the young Monarch, warmly, "and my claim is just. I will have it, and 'twill be better for the wealth and honor of England, when it is once quietly in my possession."

"Quietly in your possession it will never be," replied Wat. "The French will never sit quietly beneath the dominion of a foreign power, no more than would England. We have little possibility of gaining more than a bare subsistence at the best of times, so long as the present laws exist; but to support this vile, unjust, French war, and the extravagance of your court, we are drained to the dregs. We are held as slaves, and yet we are compelled to support the being, whose property we are told we are. There is not a device a scheming and avaricious minister can invent, that is not turned into a mode of raising taxes. We pay a heavy price for land; we are held in bondage, and are liable to be removed, God knows where, at a moment's notice; we are taxed in every way; and because every article upon which an odious impost could be laid was exhausted, the monstrous poll-tax was levied—a tax upon a man

or woman, because they cease to be children—a tax which nothing on earth could justify—a tax which was infamous in every relation—a tax, which even in its collecting inflicted the vilest injury. The scoundrel who demanded it of my family grossly and monstrously insulted the modesty of my daughter—my only child—for which I slew him—an act of justice which was responded to by the uprising of the whole country; and the people, finding they had been trampled down as far as they could be, at once threw off the burden, and gloriously resolved to be free. And know, King of England, an' thou wouldst retain thy throne, thou must make them so—be liberal to them, and they will exceed thee in liberality to thee. As thou art just, thou wilt find them loyal and faithful. The price of land must be reduced, that they may be better able to purchase it, and receive a better share of what they have worked for; and no man must be denied in his hour of distress from taking venison to save himself from starvation."

"I cannot have the forests cleared of game in that fashion," said the King, quickly.

Wat Tyler looked at him for a moment, and then rejoined—

"A man's life was not given him that he might starve in the midst of plenty. God gave not you wealth that you might deny a starving man food that runs wild, and which, by the law of God, is as much his as yours. It may be pleasant for you to find the banquet waits your appetite—the couch that waits your body to repose on, sheltered from rude winds or cold, or rain; but you would be more liberal in your opinions of your fellow creatures if you had found an appetite that looked in vain for a banquet, or needed a couch to rest your weary head upon, and if you found it, to be still unsheltered, exposed to all the fury of the heaviest weather. The peasantry support the state, and therefore have a right to be unoppressed; they contribute to your luxuries and comforts; they permit you and the body of nobles who never knew what labor was, to possess vast portions of land. They have tamely suffered ye, a miserable few compared to them, to hold possessions which should be equally shared among them; for what are you, as a human being, better than I, or I better than the meanest in yon mass of people? It is the fortune of your birth, and the supineness of the people, that have made you King, where, upon your own merits, you might have been a beggar. The people have been famished and beggared by you and your ministers. They will no longer endure it, and, therefore, they have risen up against you and them, to make demands which they will have granted."

"And their demands are what?" inquired the King.

"Your professed ignorance will avail you nothing," said Wat. "You yesterday heard what they were; they are just, and more moderate than you are deserving of, and before we retire to our homes you shall grant every word of them; and, remember, that any attempt to evade them, or forfeit your promise, will be fatal to you."

During the latter part of this colloquy, the followers of the King had, headed by Sir John Newton and William Walworth, the mayor, surrounded Wat, so that he was no longer to be seen by his followers; but in the energy of his speech he did not perceive this until it was too late. The young King, who was cowed by the calm firmness Wat displayed, and the evident superiority of his mind, was unable to preserve the dignified haughtiness which he had hitherto been taught to assume to those who were in a station so immeasurably inferior to his own, added to which, the continual excitement he had been in during the proceedings of the Commons, and the alarm which the presence of so enormous a body of men arrayed in arms against him would naturally create, made him listen more patiently to Wat Tyler than he would otherwise have done, and receive his plain speech with a placidity and a silence which was foreign to him. He had been tutored to promise anything and everything, with the strict understanding that when the people were dispersed that his charters or "letters," as they were termed, were to be held as nothing, and if any outery were made at the breaking of his oath, he was to have a dispensation from the Pope, upon the plea that it was extorted from him illegally and by force. He, therefore, curbed the naturally pettish impatience of his temper, and listened to our hero with the feelings of one who receives a lecture with the conviction that he can afterwards be well revenged upon the lecturer. A flush mounted to his brow at Wat's last words, but he stifled his anger, and said—

"My people shall have their wishes; let them return home; their letters shall be sent to them."

"They will take them with them," said Wat, quietly.

"They shall do so if they wish it," replied the King.

"They have determined to do so!" observed Wat, "nor will they separate until they have them in their possession."

"I will cause a number of clerks to make them out instantly, and the people shall have them to-night," said the King, determined not to be the cause of delaying their departure; too glad, on any terms to get rid of them.

"You must also make oath to me and to them that every clause granted in the charters shall be now and for ever after carried out."

"I will," exclaimed the King.

"And make oath also that you will not seek from the Pope any dispensation from the oath you have made to the people."

"Vile caitiff!" exclaimed Sir John Newton, who had succeeded with his followers in completely surrounding Wat; "do you doubt the King's honor?"

"Aye!" replied Wat, briefly, "as much as I do thy honesty." Then, turning to the King, he continued, "We will not be satisfied with aught else, and if you refuse this, the throne of England shall no longer be a seat for thee—thy brow no longer wear the crown; the sovereign people shall—"

"Base hind!" roared Walworth, "dare you threaten the King?"

"Seize the audacious rebel!" cried Richard, on seeing himself supported by his knights."

"Faithless villains! dare but to lay a hand upon me," cried Wat, "and ye—" His words were arrested by a blow from the mace of Walworth upon the temple, which stunned him. The next instant, Sir John Newton gave him a deadly blow in the back with a dagger, which he had obtained from a follower after giving up his own to Wat, while the Mayor repeated his blow with the mace, which struck Wat a frightful blow upon the shoulder; he had neither chance nor opportunity for resistance, for, like a set of ravenous wolves upon a single victim, the whole mob struck at him with swords and daggers, but did not succeed in wounding him: but the horse upon which he rode received several mortal thrusts, and rearing madly up plunged forwards towards the Commons, breaking an opening for himself; but ere he reached a hundred feet, he fell, and then, for the first time, the people saw what had been done, and a roar burst from them like a peal of thunder. In an instant a thousand bows were bent, and would have been discharged but for John Ball, who, springing before them, threw up his arms, and cried aloud—

"It was Wat Tyler's wish and command that no

man shed blood to avenge him, if he fell by the treachery of the King and nobles. Hold your hands, I charge ye, for the love of Heaven!"

That appeal saved the King's life and that of all the nobles with him; the people knew not how to act, and Richard acting upon the advice of Walworth, who cried out that to flee would ruin all, governed by an impulse, removed his cap, and galloping up to the Commons, cried out with a clear rich voice—

"Hold your hands, my good people, I am your lawful King—would you shoot at one thus unarmed and in your power? Grieve not for him who has fallen, he would have been a traitor to you. I will be your captain and leader; follow me to the fields—there I will grant ye all your demands, and a free pardon for everything that ye have done, so help me! the grace of God."

Multitudes, like great events, are to be turned and moved by small things. It was a critical moment, and nothing but an act appealing entirely to generosity and the proudest feelings could have turned it to his wish; he turned his horse's head, and the people mechanically followed him.

In the meantime, the instant Michael had seen Wat fall, he uttered a shout of fierce indignation, and sprung forward to his aid. With his single arm he cleared the space around him—in a second he hurled Sir John Newton to the ground, and cut down a fellow who was just about to beat out Wat's brains with a club; in another minute he was joined by Jack Straw and Rubric, about a a dozen of the Dartford people, and as many of the Brenchleyites. They all formed round Wat, and a fierce struggle commenced for the possession of him. Michael, however, raised him in his arms, while the few sturdy but lion-hearted friends formed round him and covered his retreat. He bore the bleeding body of his friend into St. Bartholomewe's Priory, and obtained possession of a room—and there he laid our hero, who was quite senseless from the blow of Sir William Walworth's mace. They were followed to the room by the soldiers of the King, but defended it manfully; one of the soldiers was killed, and the rest retired for a reinforcement. With the quickness of lightning Rubric dragged the body of the man-at-arms into the room, and suggested a change of clothes with Wat, representing that they might be able to convey him without discovery to Dartford. It was no sooner suggested than acted upon, but ere it was completed the soldiery returned, and the little band met them at the entry, fought long and furiously, and after slaying several, repulsed them. Again they returned, to be again repulsed; they made every effort, having thrice the number of their opposers, to carry it by storm; but, with all their efforts, their discipline, strength, and exertion, they were beaten off, and departed for a fresh accession of men, which should set the issue beyond a doubt. Ere they returned the exchange had been effected; the man-at-arms, who happened to be nearly of the same age as Wat, with the same colored hair, was not likely to be discovered in our hero's garments for who he really was; but to prevent any possibility of it, they gashed the dead man's face so as nearly to obliterate the features, and then Michael, Rubric, and several others bearing Wat, carefully conveyed him through a window to the back part of the building, followed by the remainder of the little party, and came, unexpectedly, upon a number of horses belonging to a portion of the retinue of the King, which had been placed there only a few minutes previously.

These they all mounted with the exception of Jack *Straw, who,* pressing Wat's unconscious hand as he was placed before Michael on his horse, returned to the Commons with a sorrowful heart, and on the instant of his departure the little band clapped spurs to their steeds, and, at the top of their speed, made for London Bridge—fearful at every step they took of interruption, but determined to fight their way through it, whatever it might be, nor resign the body of Wat Tyler while one of them could hold a weapon; but there was little chance of their being stayed, for the citizens who had not joined the rioters or the King kept within their houses, not even attempting to come to the windows, and the rest of the people who were abroad, one and all, found their way to Smithfield, from whence they had not yet time to come and circulate what had taken place.

The bridge was passed uninterruptedly, and they dashed through Southwark, intending to make direct for Dartford, but at the suggestion of Michael they stopped at the residence of a skilful leech in the Borough, and upon finding the owner within, they requested him to dress Wat's wounds. He knew them to be a portion of the rioters, and as he did not know but their star was still in the ascendant, he thought it advisable, to save his house from being fired and his property from destruction, to acquiesce in their wishes to the best of his ability; accordingly, he paid Wat great attention, and having dressed his wounds with the utmost care and skill, he pronounced them not in reality mortal, but so dangerous as to require the greatest attention to prevent their becoming so. Michael spoke of the journey it was necessary for him to take, and the old surgeon instantly told him that unless he observed the utmost precaution it would certainly prove fatal. There was strong reason to follow his advice, but there was certain death in remaining there, so choosing the only alternative, they determined on the journey, and promising to observe every instruction he gave them to the letter, they quitted his house, and mounting their steeds, Michael bearing Wat in his arms, they galloped off to Dartford.

In the meantime, William Walworth, now Sir William, for Richard knighted him upon the spot for his murder of Wat Tyler, while the King was leading the bewildered Commons to the fields, galloped through the City, crying out at the top of his voice as he flew along—

"Ye good citizens, help your King that is to be murdered, and succour me, your Mayor, that am in the like danger; or if you will not succour me, leave not your King destitute."

His summons was instantly obeyed by the appearance of a large number of the richest merchants, who, with a strong body of servants well armed, came forth as he reached their respective houses; they were joined, too, by Sir Robert Knowles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth, with a vast number of followers; aldermen also, with servants, and the chief merchant of the City, one Nicholas Bramber, who retained a great force in his service, and having an enormous property to lose, had armed them to defend it. The number of armed men which Sir William Walworth was thus able to gather together at a few minutes' notice, numbered eight thousand, and with these at his back, he gallopped off to Smithfield. When he reached it, he was marvellously astonished to find the body of Wat Tyler had disappeared, and made instant inquiry as to what had become of it, and was told that it was in the hospital of St. Bartlemewe; he immediately rode thither, and dismounting, rushed into the building, and was speedily shown the room where the mangled body of the trooper, in Wat's dress, lay, in the possession of the men-at-arms whom

Rubric with his companions had beaten off, and who had returned with a large body of men to find the place and the body of the chief rebel deserted. Walworth instantly ordered the head to be cut off and placed upon a pole, and carried before him until he reached the King, and then, with a great show of having done a wondrous feat, he told the youthful monarch he beheld the head of Wat Tyler. The King, delighted to see so many armed men, and the head of one who was likely to have proved a most formidable foe, was no little delighted at the aspect affairs were beginning to assume in his favor, and he caused the head "to be borne neere him, therewith to abash the Commons, greatly thanking the maior for the same."

The people, now entirely without leaders—for Jack Straw was unable to reach them—seeing the arrival of the troops, grew alarmed. Always accustomed to pay the most abject obedience, and unknowing their own strength in great numbers, the most timid setting the example, they threw "downe their weapons, and fell to the ground, beseeching pardon, which lately before did glory that they had the King's life in their power," and, panic-stricken, in great numbers fled, hiding themselves in ruins, ditches, caves, fields, and any and every place which was calculated to afford them a secret shelter. Sir Robert Knowles was anxious to pursue them and cut a few thousands to pieces, by way of wholesome example to the rest, but the King, who knew neither Kent nor Essex would tamely submit, although the men were in every direction at the present moment fleeing, would not permit it, and acted with great policy. "Sir Robert Knowles was in a violent rage that they were not attacked, and *the whole of them slain*, but the King would not consent to it, saying he would have ample revenge on them, which, *in truth, he afterwards had*" —so says Froissart, and those conversant with the succeeding years of Richard's unhappy reign and subsequent expulsion from the throne, know how truly the old chronicler speaks.

Those who had not dispersed, were dispersed by the troops, and the King returned to the Wardrobe. The same day a proclamation was issued, which commanded every person, not an inhabitant of London, and who was not a resident for a year there, to instantly quit it; and any answering such description, if found there by sunrise upon the Sunday morning, should be arrested and decapitated. A few hours were thus allowed for every one to depart, but as it was hinted to Richard that there were between forty and fifty thousand people hovering about who did not at all feel disposed to go without their charters, and as he, with much shrewdness, suspected that if things came to the worst it would take no little trouble to make them, granted the charters, none of which he intended to keep, and then they all quickly and quietly dispersed. Jack Straw, or rather Rupert, and John Ball fell victims to the rascality of some of their own followers, who, for a considerable bribe, and a promise of free pardon, betrayed them into the hands of the soldiers. Rupert would not suffer himself to be captured alive—he kept the men sometime at bay; he knew that he must die, and he resolved he would not perish ignominiously—he fought desperately, but was at length cut down, after himself slaying four troopers. John Ball was hurried to prison, was mocked with a form of trial, and was then beheaded, as also was the body of Jack Straw, and their heads, with the supposed head of Wat Tyler, were all placed upon London Bridge.

"And thus terminated one of the most extraordinary and formidable insurrections that London ever witnessed." It is useless to conjecture what *would* have happened *if* the insurgents had acted upon more mature plans, and proceeded with judgment instead of following mad impulses, and suffering themselves to be led by blind passions; or what would have been the result had Wat Tyler not been struck down; it is sufficient for the purpose of the present work that such was the case, and the people, paralysed by the fall of their leader, were defeated by a sprinkle of men, when, with discretion and coolness, they might have tumbled the monarchy into the dust, and from the grossest state of slavery and despotism, have sprung into an enlightened and popular form of government, which, if virtuously conducted, is as rightful and trustful in its relations as it is just in its principles. It would be easy, but doubtless very prolix, to write a long appendage in which would be shown what the people might have done with the power and strength they possessed in themselves, if they had known rightly how to use it. It is enough that they did not, and that their insurrection became memorable from its failure rather than from any other cause. Our task in relating their acts and deeds is ended, and we now return to the hero of the work.

Wat Tyler, carried in the arms of Michael, as tenderly and affectionately as if he had been his own child on the verge of death, was borne swiftly to Dartford, and no exertion was spared to gain his dwelling as speedily as was possible. He had recovered from his swoon, but lay almost insensible; the blood he had lost was immense, and he was too old to spare it, and not sink under it; it was evident he suffered acute pain, but he uttered no word, nor did a single groan escape him. To several inquiries, earnest and sorrowful, from Michael, he replied, with a quiet smile, and endeavored to assume such an expression of countenance, that his old friend, and those with him, might not think he was enduring the greatest pain from his deep wounds, and from the motion of the steed. They at length reached the door of his dwelling—they were met upon the threshold by Violet, Rubacelle, and Flora—one single glance told Violet the truth; she did not scream, nor faint, nor burst into tears, but stood for a moment paralysed, looking like a marble statue. Rubacelle uttered a piercing shriek, and rushed forward, but Flora, who quickly discovered at the moment she perceived Wat's situation, that her beloved Michael was unhurt, was able to display more presence of mind, and seizing the horrified girl by the arm, whispered to her—

"Rubacelle—dearest Rubacelle, for Heaven's sake do not give way to your feelings now; remember your dear mother—your father. Your grief will make them most wretched; be firm, my dearest girl. Exert yourself, for God's sake! Your father may not be in so dangerous a state as he appears."

The poor girl, however, seemed bewildered; she wrestled with Flora all the while she spoke to her, and disengaging herself, rushed to Wat's side.

"Father, dear father!" she cried, "they have killed you—the monsters have killed you. I prayed to the Almighty for your safety, and he has not heard my prayer. Father, father!"

"Peace! peace!" exclaimed Michael, hurriedly; "your father is wounded, but not to death. Retire, my dear child, he will be spared to us all; your sorrow only afflicts him, and injures yourself. Flora, lead her away."

Flora did so, and, with a little persuasion, she suffered herself to be led weeping to her chamber; and they then carried Wat, who had again swooned with the exertion of his journey, to his bed.

this while, Violet had not uttered a word nor a sound—she had stood rooted to the spot; but when they bore him to his room, she started like one from a trance, and followed hastily. When she saw him laid upon the couch, looking so white and ghastly, so death-like, she flung herself in a torrent of grief upon the body, and exclaimed, bitterly—

"I expected this!"

The next instant she fainted. It was long ere she recovered, for she went from one fit into another, until at last she became so ill it was necessary to confine her to her bed. In the meanwhile, the best advice the village afforded was summoned to Wat's aid, and he was placed with extremest care—for by all was he beloved—in the best way for recovery the skill and exertions of the surgeon could devise and execute. For a few days he lay lingering between life and death, unconscious of his position, raging with fever, delirious, and in his delirium imagining himself now fighting in France beneath the banners of Sir Walter Manny—now with Violet among the sweet places in Brenchley—and then in the midst of the wild uproar of the riots. At last, the turn came, and the physician pronounced it favorable. Oh, with what joy it was received! but yet there arose a cause which speedily damped it; for it got bruited abroad that Wat Tyler was not beheaded, but at his own house, and a small party of troops were sent by a neighbouring authority to inquire into the truth of the report. As they prosecuted their inquiry with some skill, they were successful, and immediately marched to the house to demand him, and carry into execution Richard's mandate for his destruction. On their way they encountered Rubric; he stopped them, learned their purpose, and misled them, by telling them Wat was concealed in a shed which he pointed out to them; he told a plausible story, and was believed. They hastened thither to capture their prisoner, and the young Rubric flew to summon as many trusty friends as the shortness of the notice would allow. They were, however, sufficient for the purpose, and at their head he flew after the soldiers, and arrived as they had discovered the deceit practised upon them, and, with oaths, were about to proceed direct to our hero's dwelling. Not a moment was allowed them to recover from their surprise at finding a dozen or twenty youths, well armed, upon them; they were at once attacked, were speedily conquered, and deprived of their arms, were thrust from the village, and bade bear the message to the authorities, that the people of Dartford would suffer no spies in their village. This event soon spread abroad, and as many were likely to become sufferers by scrutiny, they all united in determining to keep the soldiers from the village. This, though a present benefit to Wat, was not, ultimately, of any consequence, for he, on recovering from his delirium, and being made acquainted with what had transpired, requested to be carried to Brenchley without delay.

"I was born there," he said, feebly; "my happiest hours were passed there; I wish to die there; and there is a particular spot where I wish, after death, to be laid."

He was fixed upon this point. It was in vain that the leech augured the worst for his removal; he would not be dissuaded, and his wishes were reluctantly, from the danger they involved, complied with. An opportunity occurred of his having the old cottage restored to him, and it was taken advantage of. Once more, therefore, he was in the little village he loved and prized so above all others. Violet attended on him unwearyingly; and so did *Rubacelle* and *Flora*, and certainly Michael. Never was an invalid so kindly and constantly watched, and every moment did his eyes gratefully acknowledge it. The change of place was fatal to him. Perhaps, had he remained in Dartford he would not have survived; but however it might have been, he was but a short time in Brenchley when the hour arrived for him to quit this world for a better. Those around him were not long in discovering it, and he knew it as soon as they. The leech said there was no hope of life; he felt within him that the physician spoke the truth, although it was carefully hidden from him that he had uttered the words; but if he had not inwardly known his position, he might have read it in the blank despair which all the beloved faces hanging over his couch wore. Well, he had not been too near death without a care a hundred times, that he should now fear to look upon it; nor was his a heart the near approach of the last hour could daunt. He read in the faces around they knew his hour was come, for there was not a turn, a shade, or smile upon their features. He could but understand, still he said nothing, but found himself growing more feeble every hour, sinking so very rapidly, that it was believed that he would not survive the night that this swift change for the worst had taken place; he did, and early in the morning he awoke from a slight sleep into which he had fallen, and requested himself to be raised so that he might sit upright. He was propped up by pillows, and then he said—

"The morning is very clear and beautiful—open the casement, and let the fresh air blow upon me once more." A motion was made by Violet to dissuade him, but he stopped her, and said, "It cannot hurt me now, dear Violet."

She hung her head low; he spoke the truth, and she obeyed him. He then inquired for Rubric, who had attended him very constantly, but was not in the room at the moment; he, however, appeared immediately upon Wat's request for his presence being made known to him, and when he reached his side, Wat shook his hand and said—

"I have no time for many words, Rubric; you have been kind and faithful to me, repaying what little it has been in my power to do for you with the sincerest gratitude. I have had opportunities of knowing this, and it has not been lost upon me. You love my child, Rubric; that, too, I long since discovered; and having the greatest faith in your truth and honesty, did not seek to prevent its continuance, for I saw, also, my child, unconscious herself of the fact, returned your affection. Come hither, Rubacelle," he added, addressing his daughter, who sat with a heart bursting with grief, trying hard to conceal her tears. She came at his words, and threw herself upon her knees beside him. "My sweet child," he continued, earnestly and emphatically, "we are about to part for ever on this earth; this is not a time for disguise or false delicacy; have I been mistaken in supposing your heart was bestowed upon this youth? Answer me, my love, truly and sincerely."

"No!" murmured Rubacelle, stifling her tears with the greatest difficulty.

"And," continued Wat, "if I place thy hand in his thou wilt wed him after I am gone, and strive to be to him what thy beloved mother through long years, under all visitations, has been to me?"

"I will, dear father—I will," she sobbed—almost rendering her words inaudible.

"Then take her, Rubric," he cried; "and may the great and good God, before whose throne I shall shortly stand, bless you both, and make your lives one continued happiness!"

"Amen!" cried Rubric, fervently, receiving at the same moment Rubacelle's hand from Wat, and pressing it passionately to his lips.

"You will have a treasure in her, Rubric," continued Wat; "look that you cherish her, and protect her with the fondest care, supplying mine and her mother's place, when we shall have passed away; never giving her cause to wish that I had not given thee, on my death-bed, in my death-hour, the greatest treasure I have to bestow on thee."

"May God desert me the hour I make her grieve for wedding me, and if I do not, through the years it may please him to grant us to live together, strive in all things to make her life as happy as we are in this world permitted to be!" exclaimed Rubric with the greatest enthusiasm.

"Enough," cried Wat, grasping his hand. "I press your hand for the last time. God be with you, my gallant boy; be as true and honorable as you have been; I ask no more."

Rubric was blinded with tears; he pressed his hand over his eyes, and had not power to articulate a word. Wat perceived his emotion, and once more pressed his hand, and then releasing it, he placed both his own upon Rubacelle's head, and said feebly—

"My dearest child, dry your tears; you should not weep to think the cares and pains of the world are over with me. Kiss me, my beloved child, and when I am gone, cherish in your memory my last words: that I die happy to think that I never knew a time that either by word, or look, or deed, you ever committed one act to vex me, or drew from me a harsh word. The Almighty bless and protect thee, my darling girl. What! not a word, Rubacelle; hast thou no word to say to me ere we part?"

"Father, dearest father!—I—;" it was in vain that she strove to proceed; she was unequal to the task; a torrent of tears burst from her—she kissed him with the enthusiasm of passionate grief, fell into strong hysterics, and then fainted. It was terribly distressing to all. Wat, however, bore it with the greatest fortitude, and whispered to Rubric to carry her away. Ere he parted with her he kissed her white face, and then covering his face with his hand, he motioned with the other for Rubric to take her, which he did, lifting her like an infant in his arms and conveyed her to her chamber; where, with the help of one or two elderly female neighbours who were there to render assistance, he did his utmost to restore her. Wat, when she was gone, drew his hand from his eyes, and muttered something which was inaudible, and then said to Flora—

"Flora, you have acted nobly through this trial; thy friendship for Violet has never, since childhood, decayed in the smallest degree, but never has it displayed itself so truly and purely as of late. To thank you is idle—no thanks are equal to your due; but, perhaps, in your own heart you may find some equivalent for what I would express as a sense of your unceasing kindness. We have lived beneath the same roof for years always happily. I do not suppose when I am gone you will quit the roof that shelters Violet, or be to her less constant, less faithful, less kind than you have been."

"I will never—never—leave her," cried Flora, through her tears, pressing her hands earnestly together; "it would break my heart to separate from her—I could not do it!"

"I know it! I know it!" said Wat with energy; "but I shall be missed when I am no more; the attentions I loved to pay her will be no longer hers; and, though I feel it needless, yet I ask of you to endeavour to supply their want—to be to her more faithful, more kind, if possible, than you have been."

"I will! I will!" was all Flora could articulate; and Wat, after addressing her still further, and parting most affectionately from her, so that she was nearly as weak as Rubacelle, he called to Michael. Who shall say what the agony of that simple-hearted, honest fellow, might be compared to? During all this past scene he had leaned with his elbows on the casement, and his face buried in his hands, and his whole frame quivered with the deepest anguish; albeit, no sound had come from him which might tell of the grief within. Wat smiled gently as he took his hand, and in a pleasant voice exclaimed—

"It seems but a few days since, Michael, that we were boys together; wandering with arms round each other's neck in the sunshine, through the old green wood, in search of some amusement. At this time the choice of my heart for a friend had fallen upon thee, as thine upon me, and in all things, save actual relationship, we were brothers. Why were we not brothers? Yet, perhaps, if we had been, our unity of feeling might not have been so complete. No matter; since that time we have continued the same friends as of old. We have passed through the same scenes, the same joys, the same sorrows, the same hazards, and the same peacefulness—never feeling for a moment a shade of displeasure or unkind difference towards each other. It is the law of God, Michael, that some day we must part, and he has been more than bountiful to us in suffering us to remain so long together; therefore why should we repine or grieve now the hour is come? We shall meet again, Michael, that I feel; and let us part now as though we knew it. Come, Michael, turn not your head from me, my old friend, but let your eye be bright and clear, as when you of old rushed into the field where death was stalking round us; look on me, Michael, my eye is firm and my voice clear. I know that I am going from among ye, and though there is none here I can part from without regret, yet I will not grieve for what God hath said shall be, or that nature hath echoed His voice. I have held thee here, Michael," he said, placing his hand upon his heart, "even as your devotion to me deserved, first friend of my soul, and now, as I say, farewell, I feel the full rush of all esteem for you come into my words when I pray that your lot for the future here and hereafter may be undisturbed by a pang. God bless you, Michael! God bless you, my faithful partner of so many scenes; I will not ask you to wear my memory in your heart, and while you live think of me kindly, as some household thing or some remembered scene crosses your brain, for I know that you will." Michael squeezed his hand hard, but spoke not. Wat continued, "Ere I part from you I have one request to make: it is, that you lay me in no place but beneath that little bank of flowers on the border of the wood which I have so often pointed out to you. You will promise me this?" Michael nodded—his heart, poor fellow, was too full to speak. "I shall be all the happier in being laid there. God bless you, Michael, my time grows short—God bless you, my dear old friend. What! will not your tongue bid me farewell? Say good bye to me, Michael; come, old friend, this is weak—one good bye."

Michael tried to utter a word—it died in a whisper. He tried again—he could not succeed. He squeezed Wat's hand, and then, with a groan of agony, he buried his hands in his hair, and falling on his knees, with his face upon the bed, he wept like a child—his whole frame shaking with one intense convulsion; it made the tears roll down Wat's cheek to see him.

For a moment he did not utter a word, but a cold sweat broke out over him, suddenly; and after a little exertion, he mastered it so far as to turn to Violet, who had never quitted his side, and had sat in a state of stupor during this colloquy, and bade her support him in her arms. She did so, and he laid his head upon her shoulder, closing his eyes like a weary child falling to slumber. After a little while a smile passed over his features, and then he turned his dying eyes upon Violet, and whispered, for he had strength for nothing more—

"It is a strange fancy I have always held, my beloved Violet, that you would die in my arms—I was mistaken, you see; I confess I wished it to come to pass, for I could not bear the idea of leaving you behind me. Yet now I think it a matter of goodness on the part of God, and gladness to my own heart, that I may sigh my last breath upon your bosom. My own best beloved, I am to be laid beneath the spot where first you told me you loved me. I have cherished that wish since we plighted troth there, and Michael, with his old kindness, has promised to see me laid there. It would make me happier still, happy as I am, if I thought you would be there too. I do not scorn the little churchyard, for it is a pleasant place, but the little bank is the most treasured spot in my memory." He paused; and Violet, with a burst of grief, exclaimed—

"Would to Heaven we were to be laid in it together!"

Wat muttered the name of Rubacelle; it was almost indistinct, but Violet knew that he alluded to her as a motive to bind her to life, and she pressed his hand in token of understanding him. For a little while he lay motionless, and then suddenly he folded his arms around her, opened his feeble eyes, and gazed languidly upon her, saying gently—

"The pain that racked my limbs, the agony which made me look on death—although it would cost our separation here—as a welcome boon, hath ceased, and I am free from one pang. I feel that each moment I grow more feeble; that my breath is passing away never to return; but it is so gentle, that I could almost deem it the influence of some sweet spirit drawing me gradually to a calm slumber, from which I should awake in the fresh morning with glad eyes to see thy dear shining face hanging over me, happy. Nay, my sweetest love, do not bend your head so low to hide tearful eyes, I would have you think I am but dropping to a quiet sleep, and that when I awake, you will be by my side, never, never to quit it again. When, long years since, I parted from you a boy, with a heart so inwoven with love for you that it twined with every thought or consideration of any nature which I possessed, it seemed that death itself was far easier to bear than to quit you, but that I trusted fervently the Giver of all Good would, despite the hazards with which I was encircled, grant me the happiness of rejoining you. In the midst of every peril and danger it cheered me; the hope of meeting you again made me joyful where I should have been sad, calm where my spirit would have been restless and unhappy. I believe that you bore the same feeling, and my absence was lightened to you in the fond expectation that we should be restored to each other—oh! dearest, think of our separation with the same hope. God is bountiful and full of mercy, we shall be reunited, we shall be once more happy."

He paused for a little while, and Violet, whose heart seemed crushed, wept an agony of tears. Suddenly he pressed her to his heart, and with lips almost cold, he kissed her pallid, and no less cold cheek, and continued—

"It is for the last time, my own love, we are to be thus on this earth; but there is a vision in my eyes in which thou and I are re-united. Oh, Violet! I could be happy to die were it not that I leave thee, but the will of God be done; there is an iciness crawling—crawling over me, and I think I see the face of her who died for me, smiling on me. Violet! she waves me on, but points to thee; press me to thy heart, for I am very—very cold—so; thy tears are hot on my cheeks, my best beloved. Do not weep, I never turned from loving thee; never—never. I die with my whole heart thine—thine. Weep not, my dearest love—weep not. I feel thy painful sobs as they heave thy chest—weep no more, my dearest love, for I am—happy."

There was a pause ere the last word was uttered, but when it was spoken his spirit fled.

Violet screamed and fainted when she discovered it, and was carried away, and then the last sad offices were paid to him.

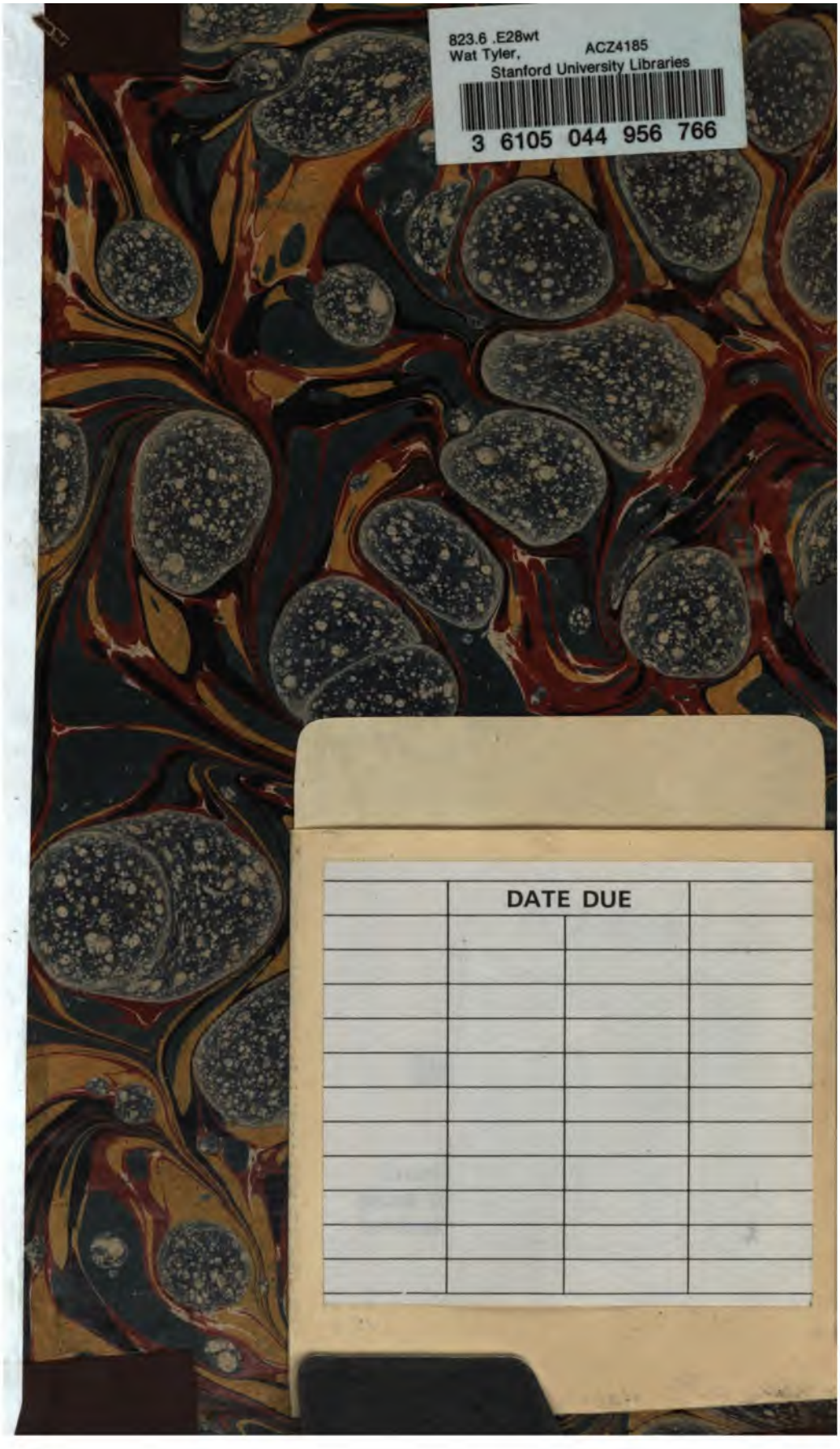
The next morning Violet was found dead in her bed; there was no appearance of struggling, of distortion, of violence. She lay as calm and still as if in a placid sleep, smiling, seeming happy that she had not been left behind him, even one day.

They were both laid in the one grave. God granted her her wish, and they were laid together beneath the little hillock where they had first sworn to be true to each other, and never change. May all lovers who plight their troth preserve their vows as religiously as did Violet and Wat Tyler!

There was much grief in the village, although the inhabitants had but so recently returned to it. Michael never held up his head afterwards—he wandered about restlessly, took ill, and never recovered—sinking rapidly, without one rally, until he died. At his own wish he was laid in a grave beside the one in which Wat Tyler rested, and in his last moments seemed most happy in dying, that he might rejoin his old friend. Flora outlived him a few years, dwelling with Rubric and Rubacelle, who wedded and lived very happily together; she, like Violet, passed away in her sleep without a token that she had suffered a pang in dying.

The chronicle is ended—the labour of many an hour is finished. If the writer has reason to believe that a few out of the many who have perused these pages have been amused, and have a kind thought to bestow upon the author, his labour will be recompensed—his toil repaid.

THE END.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